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ROBERT ANDERSON'S WOMEN:
THEIR RITUAL ROLE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Jeannine White Wilkins

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1976

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For

David and Lisa
I first met Robert Anderson when he was Playwright-in-Residence at The University of North Carolina where I was working on my Master's Degree in Theatre. He was a very open and honest person in discussing his own work and in evaluating the work of aspiring students. In one of my sessions with him he advised me to write only about ideas that concerned me very deeply. I have thought about his admonition many times while working on this study.

When I wrote to him several years later and told him I planned to write my dissertation on the women in his plays, he was very responsive to the idea. He offered to answer any questions I might have and did in fact send me taped responses to my initial inquiries. However, it soon became apparent to us both that it was painfully difficult for him to submit to the kind of analysis I had chosen to do. Anderson's writing, while not entirely autobiographical, is highly personal. It is extremely difficult to separate his life from his work although I have made a deliberate effort to do so. Because he is so intimately involved with his writing it became impossible for him to continue to answer my unavoidably personal questions. We agreed that I would continue the study alone and that it would be based on the works themselves, not on biographical data. Because I respect and admire Robert Anderson as a person and writer, I chose not to use any of the taped material he sent me. I believe the analysis
of the plays stands on its own and it is my hope that it will shed
new light on the value of Anderson's contribution to dramatic liter­
ature.
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INTRODUCTION

On September 30, 1953, Tea and Sympathy opened at the Barrymore Theatre in New York. The evening marked the beginning of Robert Anderson's long and distinguished career in the American Theatre. His plays have appeared on stages throughout the world and have been adapted for both screen and television. Anderson's works are concerned primarily with the relationships between men and women caught in the conflicts of daily life. Because he deals almost exclusively with this theme, some critics have condemned his plays as soap-opera. While it is true that Anderson is interested primarily in the male-female relationship and the institution of marriage, his works are far from being merely modern domestic dramas. Underlying these plays is a structure that is as old as drama itself. His plays are enactments of the ritual of death, purgation, and redemption that has its roots in the ancient forms of theatre. It is the purpose of this study to examine the structure of the plays and the role of women in the rituals which form the basic pattern of Anderson's work.

The value of such an undertaking is two-fold. First, it may contribute to our understanding of Anderson and his contribution to the theatre. Only original plays have been selected for study so that all facets of the work can be attributed to a single author. Although Anderson has done several adaptations of the works of others, such have not been included in this study. Second, such an analysis of Anderson's plays may add to our knowledge of women's roles as they
are expressed in contemporary art. In a society which is experiencing rapid changes in the status of women, it is important to examine the images reflected in a communal art form such as the theatre.

One approach to Anderson's work is to analyze the underlying ritualistic structure and the archetypal images that occur in them. No such critical evaluation of the plays has been done. Present evaluations are concerned primarily with plot, characterization, and theme rather than ritual and symbol. In his dissertation, The Apprenticeship of Robert Anderson, David Ayers has analyzed themes that develop from the very early plays and continue into Anderson's mature works. His analysis has provided an invaluable base for the present study, but it is concerned primarily with storyline and character development rather than ritual structure. Several critics have noted characteristics of Anderson's dramatic structure that suggest the rituals and archetypal imagery in them, but none has made a comprehensive study of these aspects of the plays.

In What is Theatre Eric Bentley says:

Tea and Sympathy is a highly superior specimen of the theatre of "realist" escape. Superior in craftsmanship, superior in its isolation, combination, and manipulation of the relevant impulses and motifs. Its organization of the folklore of current fashion is so skilful, it brings us to the frontier where this sort of theatre ends. But not beyond it. One doesn't ask the questions one would ask of a really serious play. Here, in the cuckoo land of folklore, one doesn't ask how the heroine knows the hero is innocent, one doesn't permit oneself the thought that he may not be innocent, for he has an innocence of a kind the real world never supplies: an innocence complete and certified. One

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doesn't ask how her husband could be so unloving and yet have got her to love him: one accepts her neat, fairy-tale explanation that one night in Italy, he needed her. One doesn't ask just how the heroine's motives are mixed—to what extent her favors are kindness, to what extent self-indulgence—for, in this realm, the author enjoys the privilege of dreamer, neurotic, and politician to appeal to whatever motive is most attractive at the moment.2

Bentley touches on several important points. As he suggests, Anderson's men and women function not only as characters of flesh and blood, but also as archetypal symbols that move in a world highly structured and controlled. What Bentley calls "the cuckoo land of folklore" is a carefully patterned ritual and the characters are an integral part of that ritual. Their actions are prompted by the needs of the ritual as well as by the events of the play. This same controlled manipulation of characters is pointed out by Walter Kerr:

All values have fallen into perfect balance. The play is airtight. But it really is airtight. No character can breathe here. The virile boy cannot behave as virile boys behave; he must mark time until the plot is ready to make use of him. The sensitive wife cannot marry as sensitive women marry; she must swiftly explain away the oddness of her choice. And into the same woman's life, at the same moment in time, come two males who counter each other precisely. Coincidence is as surely at work here as in Scribe.3

The structure of all of Anderson's plays has this apparent control of events. As Kerr says, "The play would seem to have been built backward from the final scene . . ."4 The contrived structure serves a purpose which becomes apparent if we look at the plays as rituals as well as realistic projections of the world around us.

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The method of this study is based in part on the critical theories of Kenneth Burke. Burke believes that all poetry is symbolic action and that it acts as a ritualistic release for both poet and audience. By discovering the function of the ritual for the characters within the play we can then discover the function of the ritual for the audience. Burke also maintains that by analyzing the public meaning of the symbolic expression of the artist, we can then make assumptions about the private meaning for the poet. This study will attempt to determine only the public meaning and will not draw conclusions concerning the specific function of the ritual for the writer.

There are three major steps in analyzing the plays in terms of the ritual role of the female characters. The first is an analysis of the structure of the play; that is, a tracing of plot development, spatial movements, and internal conflicts. The second step is a cluster analysis of images that appear with significant frequency such as love, sex, up-down, fire, flowers, eating, life-death. The third step is an analysis of what Burke terms the dramatic alignment or the conflict between major elements. In Anderson's plays we will find that the dramatic alignment is in every case between life and death. The image of women is closely tied to this alignment in that women represent both life and death to the male characters. The great conflict for the men in Anderson's plays is that they view women as both givers of life and bringers of death.

The Burkian method of analysis incorporates the theory of archetypal images. Burke believes that since mankind shares a common sense of guilt and seeks a common means of redemption that certain
themes and images will recur in all works of art. Such themes and images are the outward manifestations of archetypes, commonly held psychic responses to life. While themes or images are external projections archetypes are a part of the unconscious mind. In order to externalize such emotions we seek in nature some act or form that reveals the internal experience. Some examples of projected archetypes are the journey or quest, the sacrificial death and rebirth of the hero-king, images of fire and water as a form of purgation and redemption.

The theory of archetypal images is based in large part on the work of C. G. Jung. Jung assumes that the symbolic language of a work of art originates in both the conscious and unconscious mind of the artist and that such expressions arise from the common psychic experiences shared by all persons. This communal awareness is not learned but rather results from the universally experienced cycles of life such as the seasons, the rising and setting of the sun, birth and death.

Jung writes:

All mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection—that is, mirrored in the events of nature.  

Since all mankind experiences the phenomena of nature; the seasonal changes, birth and death, we have within our unconscious a series of experiences that link us to all others at the psychic level. These commonly held experiences are archetypes which are expressed through images in the symbolic language of myths and rituals. Such archetypes appear throughout the history of mankind and serve a psychic purpose in that they express fears, needs, and desires that are universal. The act of expression through ritual and myth purges us, at least temporarily, of our fears and desires.

Ritual is one way in which man attempts to control his life and to triumph over death. We experience the regular patterns of life in the phenomena of nature and yet inevitably disorder, chaos, and death occur. In an attempt to gain some power over events, man turns to ritual. Repetitive acts following a predetermined pattern are used to evoke a sense of control over one's destiny.

Rituals function on two levels in Anderson's works. There are superficial rituals of daily life such as eating, celebrating special holidays, birthdays or anniversaries, presenting gifts or flowers, etc. Beneath these rituals is another and more significant ritual, that of death, purgation and redemption. This ritual is closely associated with the act of sexual intercourse. The ritual is designed to renew life and to prevent death. The man is always the person who experiences death, purgation, and redemption but the woman is central to the ritual since she is the source of protection, comfort and life. Through her the man is reborn and the sex act represents a ritual enactment of his death and resurrection.
In The Golden Bough, Sir James Frazer describes an important aspect of this ritualistic seeking for contact with another being:

... wherever a pretense is made of killing and bringing to life again the novice at initiation, there may exist or have existed not only a belief in the possibility of permanently depositing the soul in some external object--animal, plant, or what not--but an actual intention of so doing. If the question is put, why do men desire to deposit their life outside their bodies? the answer can only be that, like the giant in the fairy tale, they think it safer to do so than to carry it about with them, just as people deposit their money with a banker rather than carry it on their persons. We have seen that at critical periods the life or soul is sometimes temporarily stowed away in a safe place till the danger is past.6

We will see that in Anderson's plays the ritual not only provides an enactment of death and resurrection, but is a symbolic depositing of his life with the woman who is the source of comfort and compassion. She then assumes the burden of responsibility for his life. Ideally the man avoids responsibility and thus any sense of guilt.

The artist gives form to his inner experiences through the symbolic language of art. In the dramatic work of art the words, actions, and images convey the universally experienced archetypes. Eric Fromm writes:

Symbolic language is a language in which inner experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as if they were sensory experiences, events in the outer world. It is a language which has a different logic from the conventional one we speak in the daytime, a logic in which not time and space are the ruling categories but intensity and association. It is the one universal language the human race has ever developed, the same for all cultures and throughout history.7


Symbolic communication is not only a language of spoken images but also of external actions as well. Once unconscious experiences have been externalized we are able to deal with them Northrop Frye says:

... the narrative aspect of literature is a recurrent act of symbolic communication: in other words a ritual. Narrative is studied by the archetypal critic as ritual or imitation of human action as a whole.  

The selection of archetypal images by the poet is both a conscious and an unconscious process. The artist consciously chooses certain words, actions, and characters to convey his ideas, but hidden in the work are many unconscious elements that reveal a deeper level of symbolic meaning. Frye suggests that the artist:

... has his private mythology, his own spectroscopic band or peculiar formation of symbols, of much of which he is quite unconscious. 

Rueckert writes of Burke that he:

... believes, with Maud Bodkin, that the psyche of the artist, like that of the dreamer, spontaneously generates images which individuate or re-embody the various psychological universals.

The theory of archetypal images as expressions of the unconscious mind is found in many critical approaches. Philip Wheelwright says:

It is a discoverable fact that certain symbols such as the sky father and earth mother, light, blood, up-down, the axis of a wheel, and others recur again and again in cultures so remote
from one another in space and time that there is no likelihood of any historical influence and casual connection among them.\textsuperscript{11}

Frye states:

If archetypes are communicable symbols, and there is a center of archetypes, we should expect to find at that center, a group of universal symbols. I do not mean by that phrase that there is any archetypal code book which has been memorized by all human societies without exception. I mean that some symbols are images of things common to all men, and therefore have a communicable power which is potentially unlimited. Such symbols include those of food and drink, of the quest or journey, of light and darkness and of sexual fulfillment . . . \textsuperscript{12}

Concerning the archetypal or universal symbol, Fromm writes:

The universal symbol is the only one in which the relationship between the symbol and that which is symbolized is not coincidental but intrinsic. It is rooted in the experience of the affinity between an emotion or thought, on the one hand, and a sensory experience, on the other. It can be called universal because it is shared by all men, in contrast not only to the accidental symbol which is by its very nature entirely personal, but also to the conventional symbol, which is restricted to a group of people sharing the same convention. The universal symbol is rooted in the properties of our body, and, therefore, not restricted to individuals or to specific groups. Indeed, the language of the universal symbol is the one common tongue developed by the human race, a language which it forgot before it succeeded in developing a universal conventional language.\textsuperscript{13}

This study will attempt to relate the theory of archetypal images to Anderson's works, and specifically to his characterization of women. We will find that the image of women is reflected through the concept of the anima. Jung describes the anima as " . . . this female element in every male."\textsuperscript{14} He called the counterpart in the woman the animus.

\textsuperscript{11}Philip Wheelwright, The Burning Fountain. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), p. 6

\textsuperscript{12}Frye, Anatomy of Criticism. p. 118.

\textsuperscript{13}Fromme, The Forgotten Language. pp. 17-18

The concept of the anima is complex.

... anima is the contrasexual part of man's psyche, the image of the opposite sex that he carries in both his personal and his collective unconscious. ... In other words, the human psyche is bi-sexual, though the psychological characteristics of the opposite sex in each of us are generally unconscious, revealing themselves only in dreams or in projections on someone in our environment. The phenomenon of love, especially love at first sight, may be explained at least in part by Jung's theory of the anima; we tend to be attracted to members of the opposite sex who mirror the characteristics of our own inner selves. 15

The qualities of the anima can be projected outward so that they appear to be the qualities of another individual. M.-L. van Franz, a disciple of Jung's states that:

It is the presence of the anima that causes a man to fall suddenly in love when he sees a woman for the first time and knows at once that this is "she". In this situation, the man feels as if he has known this woman intimately for all time; he falls for her so helplessly that it looks to outsiders like complete madness. Women who are of "fairy-like" character especially attract such anima projections, because men can attribute almost anything to a creature who is so fascinatingly vague, and can thus proceed to weave fantasies around her.

The projection of the anima in such a sudden and passionate form as a love affair can greatly disturb a man's marriage and can lead to the so-called "human triangle" with its accompanying difficulties. 16

We will see in several of the plays examples of passionate love at first sight and the unrealistic fantasies that several of the male characters weave around the women they love. There are also examples of the "human triangle" and the strain it places on the marriage. We will find that in two of the plays the central male character has a


strong relationship with his mother which greatly influences his
attitude toward other women. As van Franz remarks:

In its individual manifestation the character of a man's anima
is as a rule shaped by his mother.¹⁷

Jung has described four stages in the development of the anima:

The first stage is best symbolized by the figure of Eve, which
represents purely instinctual and biological relations. The
second can be seen in Faust's Helen: She personifies a romantic
and aesthetic level that is, however still characterized by
sexual elements. The third is represented, for instance, by the
Virgin Mary—a figure who raises love (eros) to the heights of
spiritual devotion. The fourth type is symbolized by Spalentia,
wisdom transcending even the most holy and the most pure.¹⁸

We find examples of the first three anima images in Anderson's
works, but the fourth type does not appear. All of the positive
female characters have the maternal qualities of compassion, solici-
tude and protection. They are often associated with the ritual act
of feeding or nourishing. Many are linked with flower imagery that
is consistently associated with the loved woman. Such images are
symbols of life. Jung describes the earth-mother concept as:

... maternal solicitude and sympathy; the magic authority
of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation that tran-
scend reason; and helpful instinct or impulse; all that is
benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth
and fertility. The place of magic transformation and rebirth,
together with the underworld.¹⁹

In the plays, women who are of a positive nature retain the maternal
earth-mother image but add to it the sexual quality of Jung's second
classification, Faust's Helen.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 82.
The female archetypes have negative as well as positive connotations. The great dilemma for Anderson's male characters is that women represent both life and death for them. The woman who is the object of sexual activity which promises life, may deny such activity and thus bring death. The loving earth mother can turn into the witch or terrible mother. Jung states that:

On the negative side the mother archetype may connote anything secret, hidden, dark the abyss (sic), the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, and poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate.20

The uncertainty and changeability of the female image is one of the important qualities of the women in the structure of the plays. One can never be absolutely certain of her true nature.

. . . the anima is bipolar and can therefore appear positive one moment and negative the next; now young, now old; now mother, now maiden now a good fairy, now a witch; now a saint, now a whore.21

Rollo May has remarked on this dual nature of the anima image and its male counterpart, the animus:

Now what is especially interesting is that this term animus means both a feeling of hostility, a violent, malevolent intention (animosity) and also to animate, to give spirit to, to enliven. All of these terms have their roots in the Latin anima, soul or spirit. Thus the wisdom of the words, distilled through man's history, is that the denied part of you is the source of hostility and aggression, but when you can, through consciousness, integrate it into your self-system, it becomes the source of energy and spirit which enlivens you.22

20Ibid.
21Ibid., p. 199.
The anima image is an external projection of the man's own psyche. It conveys his unconscious attitude toward women and toward himself. All relationships are influenced by these unconscious projections of inner experiences. For this reason it is impossible to study the image of women in isolation. Their characters are inextricably bound up with the men's identity and we cannot understand one without examining the other.

The most important quality of the male-female relationship in Anderson's plays is the interdependence of the two people involved. All of the female characters, whether positive or negative, have great power in that they determine life or death for the man. He is dependent on them for life and yet fearful that they may bring death. Therefore he both loves and worships her as well as fears and hates her. But the women are also given life through the man. His need for her becomes her "raison d'être" and without it she would lose her identity.

The central ritual which reveals the female archetypes is that of death, purgation, and redemption as expressed in the sex act. The man fears old age and death and his fear takes the form of a preoccupation with physical contact. Rollo May points out that "The obsession with sex serves to cover up contemporary man's fear of death." In order to combat his own mortality, man turns to sex believing that the act of sexual intercourse denies actual death through the enactment of a symbolic death. May points out:

23Ibid., pp. 105-106.
The relationship between death and love is surely clear in the sex act. Every kind of mythology relates the sex act itself to dying.\(^{24}\)

Rueckert in discussing the element of "punning" in Burke's theory says:

For example, to die is such a pun, for it means both to die physically and to have an orgasm. As Donne, and others, go to great lengths to explain, sexual dying is like physical death because each orgasm deprives you of part of your substance and hence hastens your actual death. The sexual pun on "to die" suggests the sin and guilt associated with sex, for the pun makes sexual intercourse a kind of suicide.\(^{25}\)

Sex is a form of death, but a death that man triumphs over and by so doing, reaffirms life. He has died symbolically in the experience of orgasm but has triumphed over death by an act of procreation. Through sex, the man proves his virility by begetting children, a common symbol of immortality. May describes this phenomenon:

When I strive to prove my potency in order to cover up and silence my inner fears of impotence, I am engaging in a pattern as ancient as man himself. Death is the symbol of ultimate impotence and finiteness, and anxiety arising from this inescapable experience calls forth the struggle to make ourselves infinite by way of sex. Sexual activity is the most ready way to silence the inner dread of death and, through the symbol of procreation, to triumph over it.\(^{26}\)

In Anderson's plays the ritual of death, purgation, and resurrection through sexual activity occurs again and again as the man seeks an affirmation of life. Woman has the power to grant or deny sexual activity and the ideal woman is one who sacrifices herself in order to bestow the gift of life, through sex, on the man. Any woman

\(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 103.

\(^{25}\)Rueckert, *Kenneth Burke and the Drama of Human Relations*. p. 93.

who denies sex is negative to some degree, but the most negative female characters are the women who offer sex devoid of the maternal qualities of comfort and compassion. Sex based only on physical lust is a form of degradation and death, and is thus a false ritual. Therefore, even the woman who assumes the role of soul mate and sexual partner must retain the maternal qualities of the earth mother, the ultimate source of life. The primary function of the woman, then, is as sexual partner in the ritual of rebirth.

Dr. David Blau has suggested a second reason for the man's need for emotional contact with the woman. In his analysis of _I Never Sang For My Father_ he says:

Neither man (father nor son) seemed comfortable about being close to the other without the presence of a woman between them. Their alternative affectionate and fighting behavior seems to support this possibility. By leaving and marrying, Gene avoided living with his father at a time when there is a chance for closeness.27

We will see that in many of the relationships the woman is essential not only as the sexual partner, but also as a buffer between the male characters. The woman determines sexual dominance and thus the father and son are in competition for her favor. This competition gives rise to hostility and makes communication impossible. But when the woman is removed, and the way cleared for communication, the men are uncomfortable with their closeness and feel compelled to interject another woman between them. We will see this pattern most clearly in _I Never Sang For My Father_, but it is present in other plays.

As we move chronologically through the plays we find a gradual uncovering of the underlying meaning of the ritual of death, purgation, and rebirth. In *Tea and Sympathy*, the ideal enactment of the ritual is outlined. The adolescent boy, threatened with a psychological death, is comforted and protected by the mother who defeats the father and provides a sexual rebirth for the boy. In each play that follows some element of this ritual pattern is changed and the result is a less satisfying renewal for the male characters. At the same time the changes reveal new truths concerning the male-female relationship. With painful honesty Anderson continues to probe until he touches the central nerve of this complex interdependency.

As the ritual changes and develops so does the image of the woman who is at the center. Only one woman, Laura in *Tea and Sympathy*, embodies all of the qualities of the perfect woman. Gradually as the plays progress the female characters become more reluctant to play their role until we reach Barbara in *Double Solitaire*. She completely withdraws from her part in the life-giving ritual of sexual activity. In order to understand this progression and the development of the female characters, it is necessary to look first at the ritual in its ideal form.
LAURA: THE IDEAL WOMAN

In this play Anderson creates the prototype for the ritual enactment of death, purgation and redemption. Central to this ritual is Laura, the ideal woman. She is ideal because she provides all of the qualities needed by the central male character. As his needs change, she changes to meet them. She is both maternal and sexual. She is the agent for all action, allowing Tom to remain passive, free of responsibility, and thus guiltless. She willingly assumes the burden of Tom's life and performs the ritual of his rebirth through her sexual sacrifice. Her action is sacrificial because she destroys her own life and identity as a result.

Tea and Sympathy\(^1\) concerns a young boy falsely charged with homosexuality, and the woman who helps him realize his manhood. Tom Lee is a student in a New England boarding school. He is sensitive and poetic, a loner unwilling to participate in the adolescent rough-house activities of the other boys. He is infatuated with Laura, his housemaster's wife and a woman who is compassionate and tender. She shares Tom's love of music and poetry but is drawn to him as well because he reminds her of her first husband. He was eighteen, just Tom's age, when he and Laura were married. Like Tom, he was accused of being unmanly and in an attempt to prove himself he was killed. Thus the two men to whom Laura responds most completely are

adolescent, unsure of their manhood, and dependent on her for sexual reassurance.

Laura's husband, Bill, is a very different type of man. He is an outdoorsman who prefers the company of the boys of the school to that of his wife. We learn that he was teased by his friends for remaining a bachelor, and that his marriage to Laura was the result of a need to establish the facade of the happily married housemaster. The lines in the play imply that Bill is a latent homosexual but the question of whether or not he is in fact homosexual is never clearly answered. Much of the evidence against Bill is as circumstantial as that used against Tom. Both sides are based on stereotyped images.

It is Bill who presses the charges of homosexuality against Tom whom he considers "off-horse." In spite of the fact that he is an old friend of Tom's father, Bill relentlessly torments the boy, supposedly because of his own fears of sexual inadequacy.

Laura tries to console Tom, first in a maternal role, but finally in a sexual role. In an extremely seductive scene she lures Tom into the study in an attempt to persuade him to spend the evening with her rather than go to Ellie, the town prostitute. Her plan fails when Bill returns home unexpectedly and asserts his right as man of the house. Tom, in desperation, tries to prove himself sexually with Ellie and when he fails, attempts to commit suicide. Bill's persecution of the boy increases when he hears of this incident.

From the very beginning of the play, Laura is placed between the two central male characters. She acts as a buffer between them in
their initial confrontation, but ultimately she must choose one and deny the other. There is never any question as to which she will choose, only when and how she will make her choice. We realize from the start that she is mismatched with Bill and it is only a matter of time before she denies him and turns to Tom. The climax of the play is Laura's confrontation with and destruction of Bill. She accuses him of the homosexuality he has always feared and denied in himself. Once Bill has been defeated, Laura turns to Tom and bestows the gift of life through her sexual sacrifice.

The basic ritualistic pattern in all of Anderson's plays is a descent into death by the male character and his purgation and resurrection through the sexual act with the woman. This pattern is clearly evident in Tea and Sympathy. Tom faces a psychological death that is inherent in the charges of homosexuality, and Laura sacrifices her own happiness in order to bring renewed life to Tom. All elements in the play are carefully designed to bring about this ritual of death and rebirth. Characters and actions are designed ritualistically as well as realistically. It is this highly structured form to which Walter Kerr refers when he says the play seems to have been built backward. Actions occur so that the predetermined ending can come about. Eric Bentley points out that we cannot ask of this play the questions we would ask of a really serious play. We cannot ask why Laura married Bill in the first place or why she would choose to become involved emotionally and physically with a boy. We cannot question whether or not she could have achieved the same results with a less drastic course of action.
If we begin to raise such questions the ritual falls apart. Things are so because they must be so in order for the ritual to progress.

In *Theatre at the Crossroads*, John Gassner questions the logic of the final action of the play:

> Under the spell of the action and the attractive personality of Deborah Kerr the questionable features of this climax were likely to be overlooked. The boy's libido might easily have failed him again, for instance if for no other reason than that she is his schoolmaster's wife as well as a person who could have overawed him with her dignity.²

The key phrase here is "the spell of the action." This is the power of the ritual that underlies the play. We accept the circumstances not because they are logical, but because the ritual demands that we accept them.

Laura is the central figure in this ritual. Once the action begins she alone determines the outcome. She is the only character who changes during the course of events and she changes to meet the needs of the central male character. We may assume Tom changes as a result of the action of the play, but we do not see this change because it takes place after the curtain has fallen. Only Laura develops as a character and her development is motivated by the demands of the ritual. It is essential that she destroy the father figure and bestow new life on the son. A series of actions must then be devised that will result in this ending.

When the play begins Laura is a general mother figure for all the boys in the school. She becomes a specific mother figure for Tom and

finally the archetypal earth mother. She defeats his enemies, comforts and protects him, and is the agent of his rebirth. Most importantly, she assumes all responsibility for her actions and thus bears the guilt for what happens. Her image acquires a certain sexuality as it develops, but it is the sexuality of the mother, of birth and regeneration, not of lust or passion.

Tom is a passive character, not because logic demands it--logic is strained by his passivity--but because the ritual requires that he be guiltless at the end; therefore he cannot be the agent of any actions that would create guilt. Burke maintains that the act of purgation involves a transference of guilt from one person to another. Laura, as agent for all action and as the self-sacrificing earth mother, assumes the burden of guilt, thus preventing Tom from having to carry any responsibility. In this sense, the play deviates from Burke's theory since no actual transference occurs. Laura assumes full responsibility from the very beginning. One major difference in the ritual of this play and the classical Oedipal myth is that the son does not destroy the father as he does in the original myth; the mother does. We will see this same deviation in I Never Sang For My Father only with greater complexity. Both plays are based on the Oedipal struggle between father and son, but in both plays the woman is the agent of destruction, not the son.

There are three major patterns of movement within the structure of the play and each reflects Laura's progression toward the archetypal earth-mother image. The first is Laura's movement from Bill
toward Tom. In the opening scenes, Laura is the perfect housemaster's wife, offering tea and sympathy to all of the boys and planning for a vacation alone with her husband. Almost immediately circumstances force a change. Bill prefers a vacation at a cottage with some of the boys. Tom is isolated and alone and needs Laura's special attention. She is pushed away from Bill as she is drawn toward Tom.

The element of need is critical in Laura's movement toward Tom. It is also an important factor in other plays and requires close examination. Anderson's women must feel needed in order to feel complete. They respond to men who have a desperate need for compassion and comfort because it gives them a sense of identity. One way for the man to insure the woman's attention and devotion is to present this great need to her. In an early version of *Tea and Sympathy*, the character who later became Laura says:

... Tom don't misunderstand me, but you offer a great need ... You will love your girl more than other men will love theirs, because you need her. And she in turn will love you. ... The thing I would like most in the world is to be needed ... to be loved by someone special ... someone who really needed me.

The woman is given identity by the man's need and thus there is a mutual dependence between the two. The man is always faced with some form of death; emotional, psychological, or physical and he turns to the woman for protection. In an early play, *Boy Grown Tall*, Anderson outlines the woman's role in the man's life and it is clearly as a life-saving or life-giving element:

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John: . . . when you see yourself getting lost in that organized chaos which is war, you try to hang on to something, and our love being the greatest thing that had ever happened to me in my life, I hung on to that till it got to be like a rod of steel through my spine holding me up when nothing else could have. Every guy had to have something to hang on to—It wasn't the Four Freedoms; they don't do you any good out there. It had to be something warm and personal . . . And for almost everyone it was a woman. Every cruel, hard, grimy, kind or gentle guy in the world had a woman somewhere, a woman who's (sic) his strength against everything mean and ugly and terrifying. 4

The women in Anderson's early plays willingly accept the role of savior and protector because her life is given meaning through it. It is Bill's denial of this role that turns Laura away from him and toward Tom who does so obviously need her. When Bill rejects Laura she tells him:

Laura: You're quite wrong about my not loving you. I did love you—But not just for your outward show of manliness, but because you needed me.—For one unguarded moment you let me know you needed me, and I have tried to find that moment again the year we've been married. (83)

The woman must feel needed and the positive women in Anderson's works are those who, like Laura, respond to the need in the man. Women who refuse to provide comfort and compassion for the man are negative and assume the archetypal role of witch or terrible mother.

The second pattern of movement is closely interwoven with the first. This movement is the growing contamination from the charges of homosexuality. As we will see later, certain physical areas of the stage are identified with specific characters. The study is Laura's space and reflects her character. Tom's room is his space

and it is in this area that the accusations of homosexuality take place. Thus Tom's room becomes progressively more contaminated as the action moves forward. The first charge is made by Mr. Harris, the teacher who has been seen swimming naked with Tom. The second charge is made by the other boys in the house. They enter Tom's room in order to watch a neighbor woman nurse her baby. Their off-color fascination with this event brings a "dirty" connotation to sex that continues throughout the play. Their teasing of Tom leads to a scuffle and Tom's nose is bloodied; thus an element of actual physical danger has been added to the sense of persecution.

Tom's father is the third character who increases the sense of contamination in the room. He tries to talk to Tom about the seriousness of the circumstances but there is a total lack of communication that is typical of all father-son relationships in Anderson's works.

It is Bill who completes the contamination of the room. He does not enter until the final act but his challenge is the most openly hostile. He threatens to ruin Tom if he does not leave the school. The threat is a symbol of death since it will further isolate Tom from his peers and from Laura.

By the end of the play, Tom's room has become identified with death through the charges against him. It is a highly symbolic act of purification and purgation when Laura enters this area for the first time at the end of the play. It is here that she makes her gesture of self-sacrifice which purifies the area as it offers new life to Tom. Maurice Zololow has described the visual picture that conveys this image:
In the play's final moments when Laura comes to Tom, Mielziner dramatically and symbolically suffuses the boy's room with the warmth and glow with which he formerly lit Laura's room; but this time the radiance is not from the fireplace but from the sun.

The third pattern of movement in the play is from death to life, or from contamination through purgation to resurrection. In all of Anderson's plays the theme of death and rebirth is central. Death may take many forms. For the male characters it is most often an attack on their virility as with the charges of homosexuality in this play. But death may also appear in the form of the seductress or woman who tempts the man with sexual activity which is based solely on lust. In Tea and Sympathy there are two women who symbolize the destructive woman; Lilly Sears and Ellie, the town prostitute. Both women are linked with sexual activity based on physical lust which is lacking in maternal qualities of compassion and comfort. Lilly is a relatively harmless tease, but Ellie is a true symbol of death. When Tom fails to prove his manhood with her, he attempts to commit suicide:

Bill: ... when it didn't work, he tried to kill himself with a knife in the kitchen ... (78)

Ellie is the first of many such women who represent death. They are always crude, coarse women who use vulgar language and represent a "dirty" kind of sexuality. Lilly, whose name has a punning connotation, has such characteristics. She is certainly not "lily white" but rather more a "gilded lily" since she over-dresses. Her language

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Laura says "... would make the most hardened chorus girl blush." (10)

Lilly is also linked with death although in a less dramatic way than Ellie. In the opening scene of the play she tells Laura:

   Lilly: These kids would die for love or almost anything else. Harry says all their themes end in death.

   Laura: That's boys.

   Lilly: Failure; death! Dishonor; death! Lose their girls; death! It's gruesome. (62)

Not only do the lines link Lilly with the death imagery but they foreshadow what will happen to Tom in his confrontation with the charges of homosexuality. He faces failure, dishonor, and the loss of the woman he loves. His answer is attempted suicide or death.

   Lilly is also linked to death imagery through the flowers given to her for the school dance. She describes them as; "... one of those things people put on Civil War monuments on Decoration Day." (62) As we will see, flowers often symbolize death as well as life and love.

   The prominence of death in the play is most obvious in the final scene. Tom's attitude suggests both a psychological state of death and his contemplation of suicide for a second time. He tells Laura; "I wish they'd let me kill myself." (86) Laura's final gesture is a restoring of life. In the maternal act of offering her breast to Tom she offers renewed life.

   A cluster analysis of images in the play supports the view of Laura as the earth-mother archetype. Her activities are strongly maternal. In the opening scene she is sewing a costume for Tom whose mother, we learn later, has been absent from his life since he was
quite small. This activity establishes Laura as a surrogate mother for Tom. She is, however, a general mother figure for all the boys at this point. This is evident in her question; "Are the boys warm enough in the rooms?" (12) which shows a maternal concern for their comfort, and by her insistence that Tom leave the study door open; "... so that if some of the other boys get out of class early, they can come in too." (11) Later she tells Al: "I know all your footsteps." (48) indicating more than a superficial relationship to the boys.

The maternal image of women in general is indicated by the number of references to women's breasts, the most obviously maternal part of their bodies. As Laura fits Tom's costume which is for a female role, she asks him about the size of the bosom:

Laura: We'll have to let this out around here. (She indicates the bosom) What size do you want to be?

Tom: (He is embarrassed, but rather nicely—not obviously and farcically. In his embarrassment he looks at Laura's bosom, then quickly away--) (15-16)

The other boys in the house use Tom's room to watch a neighbor woman nurse her baby, exposing her breast in the process. Lilly wears a low-cut gown designed to "... drive all the boys crazy." (61) with a view of her ample bosom.

Another image that suggests Laura's maternal role is that of nourishing. This image is connected to the breast imagery which also suggests nourishing. Throughout Anderson's plays, eating is an intimate activity. It is also a very maternal act. Laura frequently offers Tom tea, cookies, or "something to eat." (63) Her plan for a private dinner with Bill suggests the intimate nature of her desire to be close to
him. When she later refuses to join Bill and Herb Lee for dinner, it suggests her distancing of herself from Bill by refusing this intimate act with him.

Flowers are a common symbol in Anderson's works. They are most often associated with women and represent both her perfection in the man's eyes and his adoration of her. They can also be symbols of death, however. In this play we see examples of both. Tom has taken it upon himself to order Laura's flowers for the school dance. He chooses a single bloom of her favorite flower. The single, perfect flower is linked to the perfection of the woman for the man. In later plays the imagery also encompasses the wilting of the flower and the inevitable dying of love. In this play, however, the passing of love is not suggested in the flower imagery.

In *Tea and Sympathy* the death imagery associated with flowers is linked most clearly to Lilly. Her flowers are like "those things people put on Civil War Monuments on Decoration Day." (62) This dual nature in the flower imagery becomes more complex in later plays and suggests the conflicting attitude of the male character toward the woman who is both life and death.

The study is a major image in the cluster that relates to Laura. It is her space and projects her character. It is described as:

... a warm and friendly room, rather on the dark side, but when the lamps are lighted there are cheerful pools of light. (6)

The reference to the darkness and "pools" of light suggest a womb-like atmosphere. The study functions as a womb for Tom in that it provides protection, comfort, and frequently the suggestion of nourishment.
There is a fireplace in the room that creates warmth but also suggests the developing sexuality in Laura's role. A "low fire" burns in the fireplace during the scenes between Laura and Tom and suggests her role as the maternal figure providing warmth but also her role as the lover who provides the "heat" of passion.

The door to the study is a visual indication of the degree of intimacy between Tom and Laura. During the early scenes Tom wants to close the door and isolate himself with Laura. She is not ready to single him out from the other boys at this point and insists he leave the door open so that others may come in if they desire.

After Tom has been accused of homosexuality, he is forced by his father to give up his female role in the school play. Tom must call the director, using the telephone in the study. In order to prevent his being overheard, Laura closes the door isolating herself with Tom. It is a visualization of her first step toward becoming his protector.

In Act II, Scene II, we find the most clearly sexual scene in the play with the possible exception of the final gesture. In this scene, Laura has overheard Tom's plan to visit Ellie and in an attempt to prevent his going she tries to entice him into spending the evening with her. Bill has gone mountain climbing with the boys and she is alone. The scene is a seduction with obvious sexual overtones. The door to the study is "open slightly" (60) as the scene begins. When Tom appears, Laura goes to the door and she "opens it wide." (63) Once she has persuaded Tom to come into the study, she "circles behind
him to the door" (63) and "shuts the door gently." (64) The door is again a visual indication of the emotional tenor of the scene when at the end of the scene Bill returns unexpectedly and enters the study to reclaim his position as Laura's husband. Tom rushes out and Laura:

... sadly goes to the door and slowly and gently closes it. When she is finished she leans against the door, listening—hoping against hope that Tom will go upstairs. When Tom sees the door close, he stands there for a moment, turns his coat collar up and goes down the hall and out. (71)

The position of the door, in this clearly Oedipal situation, indicates that Laura has chosen the husband over the son for the moment. The study, symbol of the female body, now holds the husband. Tom, the son, is excluded by the closed door and in his bitterness he rushes out to prove his manhood with Ellie.

Another symbol figures prominently in this scene and echoes the theme of the man's need and the woman's response to it. As Tom leaves his room at the beginning of the scene, he picks up a raincoat. The coat is referred to frequently in the stage directions and is given considerable emphasis. The raincoat is symbolic of Tom's desperate need for love and sexual reassurance. It is a graphic illustration of Frazer's theory that man deposits his life with some object or person who may provide protection in a time of danger.6 The raincoat symbolizes Tom's life and he leaves it with Laura for safekeeping. Seen in this light, its prominence in the scene becomes clear. Tom is wearing the coat when he enters the room. Laura:

... comes up behind him and puts her hand on his shoulders to take off his coat. He can hardly stand her touch. She gently peels his coat from him and stands back to look at him. (65)

6 See page 6.
The language suggests the sexuality of the scene: "can hardly stand her touch", "gently peels his coat from him." By taking the coat Laura has now assumed responsibility for Tom's need. The language also suggests the sexual nature of this responsibility. After a while Tom "... walks to his coat which she has been holding in her lap." (66) The stage directions specify "holding on her lap", a maternal gesture that is also somewhat sexual because of the physical closeness to the sex organs. Tom takes the coat but Laura persuades him to stay. "Tom stands by the door beginning to think back--his raincoat in his hand, but dragging on the floor." (67) The detailed description of the coat suggests that it reflects a great deal that is going on below the surface of the scene. Laura "has won another moment's delay" (67) and Tom "Drops the raincoat again, and moves into the room" (67) When, a few moments later he picks up the coat, Laura manages once again to persuade him to stay with her. However, Tom rashly kisses Laura and she rejects him. He rushes out of the room, leaving the coat behind. It is essential that he leave the coat since it represents a need that only Laura can satisfy and he must not take it with him to Ellie. Once he is gone, Laura "picks up (the) raincoat which Tom has dropped and hides it in the cabinet by the fireplace." (71)

She is unable to respond fully to Tom's need at this point but the responsibility has been placed on her. In putting the coat next to the fireplace she leaves it near the symbol of both warm, maternal comfort and the symbol of sexuality. These are the two qualities Tom
needs and that she will give him in the final scene. The raincoat
is again a symbol of the underlying action when Laura confronts
Bill and separates herself from him. She:

... stands stunned and tired from her outburst. Then she
moves slowly to Tom's raincoat, picks it up--and turns and
goes out of the room ... (85)

Returning the raincoat is the outward motivation for Laura's going
to Tom's room. However, the symbolic motivation is of greater impor-
tance. The coat represents Tom's emotional need for Laura and as she
picks it up, she assumes the responsibility for meeting this need.
She goes to Tom's room having already determined, at least symbol-
ically, her final gesture.

Burke defines the dramatic alignment as forces in opposition.
In *Tea and Sympathy*, the overall dramatic alignment is life against
death. Laura and Tom are on the side of life although Tom is passive.
Bill, Herb Lee, Lilly, Ellie and the other boys at the school are on
the side of death. The ritual action of the play is Laura's defeat
of the forces of death and bestowing of life at the end of the play.

In defeating the elements of death, however, Laura herself must
become an agent of death. It is this that suggests in Laura the shadow
side of the maternal archetype—the terrible mother or witch. To Tom
she is the perfect, self-sacrificing earth mother, and since we identify
with Tom, we see her primarily in that role as well. However to Bill
and Al, Tom's roommate, she is the agent of death. She merely threatens
Al, but she completes a killing act against Bill.
Al plans to move out of the house because of the charges against Tom. In an attempt to stop him, Laura threatens his manhood:

Laura: Al, what if I were to start the rumor tomorrow that you were—well, queer, as you put it?

Al: No one would believe it.

Laura: Why not?

Al: Well, because—

Laura: Because you're big and brawny and an athlete. What they call a top guy and a hard hitter?

Al: Well, yes.

Laura: You've got some things to learn, Al. I've been around a little, and I've met men, just like you—same set-up—who weren't men, some of them married and with children.

Al: Mrs. Reynolds, you wouldn't do a thing like that.

Laura: No, Al, I probably wouldn't. But I could, and I almost would to show you how easy it is to smear a person, and once I got them believing it, you'd be surprised how quickly your—manly virtues would be changed into suspicious characteristics. (47)

Laura's lines suggest the tremendous power inherent in the women in Anderson's plays. She determines not only life and death, but manhood. Masculinity lies not in the characteristics of the man, but in the evaluation of the woman. Laura tells Bill later:

Laura: You men think you can decide on who is a man, when only a woman can really know. (83)

Only a woman can affirm or deny a man's virility and since, for Anderson's men, virility is life and impotence death, he is dependent on the woman for his very life. He may worship and adore her, as Tom does because she bestows life; but he must also fear and hate her, as Bill does, because she has the power to destroy him.
Laura does destroy Bill in a symbolic act of castration. She accuses him of the very homosexuality that he has suggested in Tom.

Laura: Did it ever occur to you that you persecute in Tom, that boy up there, you persecute in him the thing you fear in yourself. (84)

This is one of the places where logic fails but the ritual demands that we accept the faulty reasoning. Laura is guilty of the same stereotyped judgment used by those who have accused Tom. She bases her evaluation of Bill on her own narrowly defined concept of manhood. Because Bill married late in life, because he prefers sports and the company of boys to being with her and sharing poetry and music, and because he does not have the overwhelming need that gives her identity, she decides that he is homosexual. There is no indication that he has had any sexual contact with other men. It is clear that he and Laura have sexual relations although Laura describes them as violent rather than tender. But Anderson avoids stating clearly whether or not Bill is actually homosexual.

Bill's withdrawal from Laura may be due in part to her smothering form of love. She demands that Bill need her, that he depend on her. Such demands are "smothering" in that they tie him to her and make him dependent, something that he may wish to avoid. His withdrawal may be an attempt to establish some identity separate from her rather than any indication of homosexuality. But logic cannot be interjected at this point. The ritual demands that she choose the son and destroy the father and she fulfills the ritual role.
In the final scene she enters Tom's room and sacrifices herself to him. The act is sacrificial in that by committing it, Laura destroys her identity as we have known her. She has separated herself from Bill, has indicated that she is leaving the school and now faces a very uncertain future. Where can she go now? She has admitted that she wasn't very good as an actress and there is no suggestion anywhere in the play that she can function in any role except that of wife and mother. She is now cut adrift from all that she was and therefore is symbolically dead. Even in this, however, she is completing her ritual role. She not only performs the sacrificial act, but disappears once it is complete taking with her all guilt for what has happened. She has fulfilled the role of the perfect earth mother. She has destroyed the father, brought the son to manhood and now vanishes leaving him guiltless.

In this first play we find several images of women that will continue through other plays. The image of the perfect woman as the earth mother who sacrifices herself sexually is the dominant one, but we have also seen examples of the terrible mother and the seductress. Laura is the terrible mother in her relationship with Bill and Al; and Lilly and Ellie bring death as the seductress because their sexual characteristics are based only on physical lust.

The pervading image of woman in the play, however, is that of the perfect woman; compassionate, comforting, self-sacrificing. She is both mother and lover, providing protection and a sense of virility and manhood for the man. We will never see this image of woman in as
perfect a form. From this play on, the women grow progressively more negative. It is as though Anderson created his perfect woman in Laura, then measured all others against her and found them lacking.
KATHERINE: THE RELUCTANT WOMAN

Laura willingly accepts her role in the ritual because Tom is so obviously in need of her help and protection. He is clearly no match for Bill and Laura's own relationship with her husband denies her the sense of identity she receives from Tom. In Silent Night, Lonely Night, the woman is not as immediately willing to accept her role in the ritual, she must be persuaded to it by the man. Katherine not only loves her husband, but she sees any sexual response to John's needs as morally wrong. John cannot simply present his need and then remain passive as Tom is able to do. John must actively work to convince Katherine of the moral rightness of responding to his needs.

This play is the story of two lonely people who meet on Christmas Eve and have a brief affair. Katherine has just received a letter from her husband admitting his sexual infidelities. She is unable to accept his confession and forgive him. John is staying in the same hotel while awaiting word of the condition of his hopelessly insane wife.

The first meeting between the two is the result of John's concern for Katherine's safety. He hears her crying and is afraid she may try to commit suicide. He enters her room and insists that they share their evening meal together and then later go to a movie.

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During the first half of the play, John gives comfort to Katherine, trying to help her understand and accept her husband's affairs. Once he reveals the nature of his own situation, however, the action shifts. From this point on, Katherine is the one who must offer comfort and compassion.

The play has very little overt action. The only event that breaks the conversation between Katherine and John is the introduction of a second couple. Janet and Philip are newlyweds on their honeymoon and John invites them to have a drink. They offer a contrast between the intense passion of young love and the inevitable disillusionment we see reflected in Katherine and John.

Central to the plot is John's attempts to persuade Katherine to the act of sexual sacrifice. She refuses such involvement at first because of her strong moral code, but as the play progresses she begins to see that John's ideas are more acceptable. Ultimately she does make the sexual sacrifice which meets John's emotional needs and at the same time makes her able to understand and forgive her husband's actions. The play ends as John returns to his sick wife and Katherine prepares to fly to meet her husband.

Katherine is closely linked to Laura. Both women project the archetypal image of the earth mother in that their primary function is to provide compassion and comfort through sexual activity. There is a lessening of the Oedipal elements in the underlying ritual due to the maturity of the male character and the absence on stage of a father figure. However there are some suggestions of this conflict.
in the struggle between John's moral code and that of Katherine's father. Katherine is placed between the two approaches to life and ultimately rejects the father's code for that of John's.

The image of the woman remains primarily maternal even though there is a more obvious sexual quality to her character. Katherine provides the compassion and comfort John cannot receive from his wife because of her illness. Katherine ultimately becomes a surrogate for John's wife, Jennifer, and John is able to respond to her as he needs to respond to his wife; that is, he deposits responsibility for his life with Katherine and she provides a sense of renewal through sex.

The most obvious difference in the male characters in the first two plays is age. John is in his forties, but while he is chronologically older he is still adolescent in his emotional needs. He seeks the same comfort and protection that Tom sought from Laura but for different reasons. Age has brought a sense of responsibility and guilt and John seeks relief from this guilt as well as renewal. Tom was guiltless but John is in fact guilty because his affair with another woman has caused, however indirectly, his wife's insanity. As a result he seeks contact with Katherine as a means of purging himself of this guilt.

As in Tea and Sympathy, the basic movement in the play is from death to life. John's isolation from Jennifer and his feelings of guilt are a form of death. There are three patterns in the structure of the play that indicate the movement toward life. The first is
the descent into night and dawning of a new day. The action begins in late afternoon and moves into night as the characters descend into a psychological night. The sexual act signified a rebirth which is echoed in the dawning of the new day.

A second pattern of movement is Katherine's emotional change. She, like Laura, is the only character who changes during the action of the play. We may assume that John, like Tom, changes as a result of the experience but we see only the suggestion of such a change at the very end of the play. It is Katherine who develops as a character throughout the action. She begins as a believer in a strict moral code that precludes extramarital affairs. Gradually she comes to realize that such affairs are due to loneliness and that they are acceptable because they provide comfort and compassion for lonely people.

One significant change in this play is the man's active part in the development of the action. In Tea and Sympathy Tom is passive while Laura is the agent for action. In Silent Night, Lonely Night John is the active character throughout the first half of the play. It is he who first enters Katherine's room, insists on dinner and a movie, and invites the young couple for a drink. It is John who comes back into her room and insists on sleeping on the couch because he does not want to be alone.

John initiates all action with one significant exception, he does not make the sexual sacrifice. When we look at his actions it becomes apparent that he is setting the stage for Katherine's gesture
of sexual comforting. Since the man must be the recipient of the sexual sacrifice he cannot also be the celebrant of the ritual. But he can, and does actively create the conditions which make the woman's participation in the ritual mandatory. Just as Tom's situation grows progressively more threatening until Laura has no choice but to offer herself sexually, so John progressively reveals his desperate need for Katherine until she must offer herself to him. In both plays the woman is caught in a maze with only one exit. She may try other courses of action, but they are always blocked until ultimately the only avenue left open is that of the sexual sacrifice. John argues away all of Katherine's reservations until she, and we, are convinced that she has a moral obligation to offer herself to this man who so desperately needs her.

The third pattern of movement is the shift in emphasis from Katherine and her marital problems to John and his need for her. When the play opens, Katherine is the character who requires comforting. She has discovered her husband's infidelities and as a result, contemplates suicide at least momentarily. When John passes her room he hears her "involuntary strangled cry for help." (7) There is an immediate emotional response to each other when they meet. Anderson describes their feelings as, "--a certain unguarded nakedness of feeling on her part, a natural instinct of protection on his." (8) This immediate response which Jung describes, is the emotional need to project the anima or animus qualities of one's own personality onto
the other person. Katherine and John see in each other their own incomplete self. As von Franz suggests, there is an immediate attraction which is intensified by the very vagueness of the other person. Thus they are able to see in the stranger whatever qualities or characteristics they most need to see. John wants to see in Katherine a surrogate for Jennifer and she wants to see in him the husband who needs her and gives her identity.

While the implication in the early action of the play indicates that Katherine is the character in need of compassion, the emphasis begins to shift as John reveals the circumstances of his life. In comparison, Katherine's situation pales into insignificance.

John: I told you we'd had a wonderful marriage. We did. A lovely daughter of five.

Kath: Oh, yes . . . the accident.

John: Yes, in a sense. The accident of my becoming infatuated with another woman after fourteen years of marriage. Don't ask me why or how. I've spent five years trying to rationalize what I did. But I did. I became helplessly, shamefully infatuated. Nothing happened. She was married and didn't really care for me. I wrote her many letters, many, many letters. And one day, for the first time, she wrote me a letter . . . My wife for some reason opened it. The address looked like Mrs. instead of Mr. . . . I don't know. And quite naturally, quite humanly she read it. . . It was a letter telling me that I must not love her . . . this woman telling me . . . while she had been reading the letter, our child had wandered into the neighbor's property and had fallen into the pool and drowned . . . Four months later, we brought my wife up here . . . (59)

From this point on, John dominates the play. Katherine's sexual sacrifice is made in response to the overwhelming need John presents rather than to any sense of sexual need on her part. The women in
Anderson's early plays feel compelled to give physical comfort rather than to receive it. They are fulfilled in the maternal act of rebirth. One of the characteristics of the positive woman is that she is willing to put aside her own sense of self and become whatever the man desires her to be. She has no identity apart from that which he gives to her.

In *Silent Night, Lonely Night* the physical environment reflects the psychological development of the characters. Just as the study reflects Laura in *Tea and Sympathy*, the bedroom reflects Katherine. It is described as, "... warm and comfortable, full of atmosphere and mood. A fireplace is downstage right." (3) The room has the same warmth and underlying sexuality as the study. It also carries the clear image of the womb; a place of warmth and protection.

The door to the room is also a visual indication of the intimacy between the two characters in the play. John opens the hall door initially in response to Katherine's cry for help. She assures him she is all right and exits into the bathroom. When she hears the door close again she assumes John has left. He has in fact remained in the room and has isolated himself with Katherine in this intimate environment. Later in the play the newly married couple join Katherine and John in the room for drinks. John has issued the invitation and as they arrive he unbolts the door that connects his room with Katherine's. His gesture indicates his desire to join their two rooms and thus their lives. Katherine shuts the door into the hall, signaling her participation in this act of linking their rooms.
In the final scene of the play, after John and Katherine have had sex together, John returns to his room. He bolts the door against Katherine in a gesture of rejection. It is Katherine who must now take the initiative in opening the door and reestablishing intimacy between them.

The door is symbolic of their changing relationship. John who is the aggressor in the first half of the play, withdraws and rejects Katherine once the sexual activity is over. It is one indication that Katherine serves primarily a ritualistic function rather than an individual role unique to her being. Once the ritual is complete, she, like Laura, is no longer essential and thus must disappear or be rejected. Such action would be extremely cruel on John's part if we looked at it only in realistic terms. He has rejected the woman who gave herself sexually after a difficult battle with her conscience. Her reward for having participated in the ritual of sex is to be rejected and locked out of his room. But logic is again out of place. John rejects Katherine not out of cruelty but because the ritual requires it. He has been purged at least momentarily of his guilt. He has been renewed through contact with a surrogate wife. Once the ritual has been completed, Katherine must disappear so that John can return to his real wife.

An analysis of the images in the play reveals another link with the other works. The symbols are the same we have seen in Tea and Sympathy and will see again later. Flowers are only of minor importance in Silent Night, Lonely Night. The dinner trays that are brought into the room have sprigs of holly in celebration of Christmas.
John takes the sprigs and combines them:

John: Shall we do without the holly . . . or . . . No, I think it's rather nice now. Only we can consolidate it. (Puts the sprigs together, with difficulty) Damned hard stuff to arrange, holly. (13)

The symbolism is obvious. The relationship between John and Katherine is also "damned hard stuff to arrange."

The ritual of eating is a gesture of intimacy but it is initiated by the man in this play. John has many of the characteristics of Laura. He offers comfort and compassion, introduces the image of nourishment, and protects Katherine from the death of suicide. But his actions are all projected into the womb-like environment of Katherine's room. He is not taking on the maternal characteristics so much as he is bringing them to Katherine. Again, she, unlike Laura, must be persuaded to assume these maternal qualities.

In this play, as in most of Anderson's other works, holidays are used to heighten emotion. In Tea and Sympathy Laura's anniversary and Tom's birthday are used. In this play, Christmas creates a special emotional involvement. Holidays or anniversaries are times when being alone is even more difficult than usual. A person who is isolated at such a time becomes the object of compassion and pity. This is one reason that it is difficult to accept John's insistence that Katherine not feel pity for him. One of the great problems in the love relationships in Anderson's plays is the fine line between compassion and pity. While the men insist they not be pitied, circumstances suggest that the women can hardly feel otherwise. The fact that John is alone in a hotel on Christmas Eve awaiting word
about a hopelessly insane wife can hardly create any feeling other than pity.

One of the central themes in this play is the question of moral values. Katherine has been raised by her father to believe in a narrow, clearly defined sense of right and wrong. An obvious symbol of this strict moral code is the "Eye-of-God" charm which Katherine carries on her key chain.

Kath: In Europe in saloons and bars they used to have little porcelain plaques with an eye painted on it... it was called the eye of God. It was to remind people that the eye of God was on them.

John: Hm.

Kath: My father found this little one shaped like a charm and gave it to me when he gave me my first housekey.

John: That's slightly terrifying.

Kath: Yes.

John: I don't know as I approve of that. (Holds it up.) Kind of like a neon light blinking "no!"... "no!"... "No!" (14)

John indicates that he too has suffered from a restricting childhood.

John: I believe they should paste a big label on youth! "Perishable. Use at once!"... When I was a student here, my life seemed fenced around with "No's"... I have a friend who has a little child, and when the child reaches for something he might break or shouldn't have, the mother says, "No, Becky. That's a No-no." My youth seemed to be filled with "no-no's." (14)

This repressive upbringing accounts for much of the guilt that besets Anderson's men and, to some extent, his women. They discover as adults the inadequacy of a narrow moral code but cannot escape
its influence totally. This is why women must be pure and maternal even as sexual partners. Both men and women are raised to believe lust and sensuality by themselves are sinful and thus to feel such emotions causes guilt. Sex with a woman such as Katherine must be rationalized as a gesture of compassion, not as an act of physical desire. Even so, a distancing or rejection must occur after sex in order to lessen the sense of guilt.

Imagery that is suggested in this play but which becomes dominant in *The Days Between* is that of "up-down" movement. John's last name, Sparrow, suggests certain flying images. He tells Katherine it gives his friends "endless opportunities to exercise their wit... You know, the fallen sparrow, et cetera." (8) The fallen sparrow suggests a downward movement as well as a wounded creature in need of comfort.

John continues the imagery linked to his name by telling Katherine his family motto: "Dum spiro, spero," which means "While I breathe, I hope." However his friends have changed it to "Don't spear Sparrow." again suggesting the wounding or pulling down of a creature that normally soars up in the air.

The most important images in this play, however, are of sex and death. In the relationships between men and women in Anderson's works, loneliness is the most common motivation for sexual contact. It is the need to escape loneliness and isolation that brings Tom to Laura and John to Katherine. It is loneliness that has brought Katherine and her husband together in the past.
Kath: --One day my husband came across my poems. It was like coming across the truth locked in a drawer. I had expressed my loneliness so directly, almost nakedly.

John: What did your husband say?

Kath: I looked into a window from the garden, and saw he was reading them. He didn't see me. I went upstairs to our room, and waited. I lay down and stared out the window and waited. He came up in a while and looked at me. I could see he'd been crying. He lay down beside me and held me in his arms. It almost killed me. He didn't say anything. He just held me for a very long while. He never said anything about them. (55)

The response to such loneliness is physical contact rather than words. Her husband holds her without speaking, a pattern that we will see again more clearly in Double Solitaire. Isolation followed by physical contact is found in all of Anderson's male-female relationships. Sometimes the cycle is gentle and restorative as in this case.

Kath: For quite a while after that, we were very gentle towards each other. I, because I knew I had hurt him. He because he realized now my loneliness in our relationship. (56)

At other times it can be violent and brutal as suggested in the relationship between Laura and Bill in Tea and Sympathy where husband and wife avoid each other and make contact only in a violent coming together.

This cycle of loneliness followed by closeness is generated through the constant fear of death. Loneliness and isolation are forms of death and physical contact is a life-giving act. John, like most of Anderson's men, is afraid of old age. He tells Katherine, "I'm forty and I have intimations of mortality." (12) The same fear is suggested in his comment that the young groom "... saw in me the terrible future and I saw in him the lovely past." (21) Youth is life and
age is death. One reason the men hold on so tenaciously to the intense feelings of youth is that such emotions are proof to them of life. Tom is the ideal male character because he is just entering the most valued period of life for Anderson's men; the time of youth and intense sexuality. However, a shadow side exists to this ideal young man. He is also a man who cannot grow up, who remains infantile emotionally. We see aspects of this shadow side in most of Anderson's male characters. John remains dependent on Jennifer and cannot move beyond his emotional reliance on her.

When Jennifer goes insane she assumes a form of living death which cuts John off from physical contact with her. This isolation threatens his sense of life and he must look elsewhere for physical closeness.

John: You know, when my wife first... first after my wife died, people were very kind and did everything for me... always asked what else they could do. I couldn't ask a woman what I really wanted... "Come home and be with me all night. Just let me hold you all night." What I wanted was to hold someone.

Kath: When I go to visit my father, who's in his seventies, he always says, "Just hold me a little for a moment... Let me hold you."

John: Yes. Hold me... Help... Help. (57)

Physical contact is the means of holding death at bay against both the living death of non-feeling and the actual death of old age. Katherine's father who faces old age and actual death wants the same physical contact John seeks. "Hold" and "help" are synonymous.

Katherine's contemplation of suicide introduces death into her relationship with John:
John: Were you about to try suicide when you called for help?

Kath: I don't know what I was going to do. I just suddenly found myself crying for help. (34)

The only gesture that can meet this cry for help is physical comfort. John is prepared to accept this level of intimacy, but Katherine rejects the idea of sexual activity because of her moral code.

Kath: Yes. I was shocked at how glibly people talked about going to bed together. As though you could fall in love in an hour.

John: You think people go to bed together only because they're in love?

Kath: (She looks at him for a moment) You obviously don't think so.

John: There are a lot of other reasons besides love . . . Reassurance, courage, loneliness, comfort . . . for protection against the horrors of the night. (37)

John outlines quite clearly the reasons for sexual contact that he finds acceptable. It is important to note that there is no mention of joy, laughter, or happiness. Sex is very serious business for Anderson's men and women. Such qualities as fun and laughter are rarely seen in any of the love relationships. Happiness and joy occur only in the first intense experience of young love and even then they are qualified by more serious feelings of gratitude and devotion. John continues the image of love as a form of compassion when he tells Katherine that it is terrible to be part of a woman's life again.

John: Quiet like this. Just sharing the room. Someone to talk to at night when you wake up . . . When you're frightened of the dark . . . Someone to get an ash tray for. (52)

His lines emphasize the importance of the woman as a protector, a
maternal figure rather than an object of passion. Since time inevitably kills the first intensity of love, for Anderson's men and women, what is left is only protection and comfort "when you're frightened of the dark." Katherine implies that the same expectation is true for the woman:

   Kath: I wonder if husbands realize when their wives suddenly show up at the office and ask to be taken to lunch . . . I wonder if they realize it's a cry for help, for protection. (40)

And later she tells him:

   Kath: I'd always thought of adultery as shared ecstasy . . . shared excitement . . . I'd never realized it could be shared sadness . . . (72)

If loneliness and isolation are symbols of death, and physical contact is the act that creates life, then the role of women in this ritual of renewal through sex is that of life-bringer. In the ideal situation the woman is the wife; but when death, whether real or symbolic, prevents contact with the wife, the man must seek a surrogate. Katherine becomes a surrogate wife for John just as Laura serves as surrogate wife-mother for Tom in *Tea and Sympathy*. When the surrogate appears, the real wife then becomes an object of perfection and assumes the image of the madonna, worshipped and adored without sexual contact.

The dramatic alignment in this play as in *Tea and Sympathy* is between life and death; but these two elements are revealed most clearly in the alignment between Katherine's moral code which signals death, and John's moral code which means life. The movement of the
play is Katherine's progression from her position of denial to her acceptance of the role of life-bringer. John must persuade Katherine to his point of view and the structure of the play rests on his efforts to bring her to an acceptance of the necessity for her sexual sacrifice.

In accepting John's view and becoming a surrogate for his wife, Katherine must experience another form of death. Just as Laura relinquishes her identity in order to become surrogate mother to Tom, Katherine dies to her own self in order to become surrogate wife to John.

Kath: You were being compassionate, and then suddenly I was your wife. (He holds her, wishing to soften the pain that he may have given her) I suppose I should have been hurt when you called me by her name . . .

John: I don't know why I did that.

Kath: I do. For the first time in two years you were sleeping with your wife. And I was honored . . . and suddenly it became quite simple and beautiful.

John: (He looks at her, moved by what she's said) God, you're sweet. (68)

Katherine willingly assumes the role of surrogate wife, denying her own identity to do so. That this is what is expected of women in the ritual is borne out by the fact that Katherine's husband has also sought a surrogate wife in his affairs. He has had, not one, but several such encounters, each time seeking the same comfort and compassion John is seeking.

Kath: (Reading letter) It happened, and, to be honest, it's happened before. I'm bewildered and feel terribly isolated. I have tried. I have seen hundreds of movies alone in all the languages of the world. (44)
When he chooses someone to take Katherine's place, he selects someone who reminds him of her: "My friends who have seen her say she looks like me." (45) His partner, like John's, has become a surrogate wife and the ritual is essentially the same. He feels isolated and emotionally dead and seeks a surrogate who provides maternal comfort and a sexual rebirth.

Katherine is not immediately persuaded into this act of sexual sacrifice. Much of the play is taken up with John's attempt to bring her to it. His introduction of food and flower imagery is designed to bring such qualities to Katherine's character. His relating of his past is designed to stir in her feelings of compassion and concern that will lead to this end. He tells her about a book he has written entitled The Comfort of Your Company. In the book there is an incident almost identical to one that appears in one of Anderson's early unpublished plays, Boy Grown Tall. In both stories it is Christmas and there is another chance encounter between two lonely people who could, if they chose, offer each other sexual comfort. The man faces death since the time is the Second World War and he is being shipped out soon. John tells Katherine how the story differed from the reality of the incident:

John: ... I finally got up to go home, and I shook hands with her ... wanting to hold her and feel her warmth and give and take whatever comfort we had for each other. But we didn't. We shook hands and I left, and went back to my ship. I sailed the next day and was away for two years.

Kath: And that was the story too?

John: No. In the story he stayed the night. I wrote it that way because I knew that's what I should have done. (19)
To respond to the needs of another is morally right and to turn away from such need is wrong. Katherine has had the opportunity to respond to a similar need in another man, but she has refused.

Kath: ... there was this one man. I knew him and his wife. They were both my friends ... and then his wife got sick, and it was hopeless, and she was five or six months in the hospital ... dying. And this man was younger than I was ... I used to go to the hospital to see his wife, and when she'd fall asleep for the night, I'd go out for a drink with him, sometimes bring him home for a sandwich, listen to him talk about how much he loved his wife, and he did. (38)

Katherine refused to respond sexually to this man because, as she tells John: "He didn't love me. Any woman would have done. A prostitute." (38) John disagrees with her. He believes that: " ... with a prostitute it's a kind of mockery, and it leaves you more lonely than ever." (38) The point is very important. It is imperative that the woman who becomes surrogate wife be pure, compassionate, and comforting and that she project the image of the all-loving, all-good, earth mother. Any suggestion of lust or physical desire makes the act sinful and causes guilt. The man can avoid guilt only if the woman is maternal and compassionate rather than sensual.

At the end of Act I, it appears that John is the one who is going to make the sexual sacrifice in order to bring life to Katherine. He sees her loneliness and he responds to it. He:

... stands in his doorway, watching her. He sees her bury her head in her hands. He is touched by this misery, and moves back into the room and sits and then lies on the couch. She turns around and watches him.

John: I don't particularly want to be alone tonight. Do you mind? (47)
He does not approach her, however, nor does he offer physical contact. He simply remains nearby as a constant reminder to her that he is also in need. It is Katherine who makes the gesture of compassion by placing a blanket over him, and it remains for Katherine to initiate sexual contact. The man must be the recipient not the agent for action in the ritual.

Once Katherine does initiate contact, John insists that her action not be the result of pity:

John: Please don't say it. I'm sick of pity! ... When it started happening to my wife, everyone was full of sympathy and pity. I wanted to tell them about the letter ... to show them that I had driven her insane. But I couldn't ... I wanted to kill the woman who had written the letter. I wanted to kill myself. And all the time there was pity. And I accepted their pity, and hated myself for needing it. How wonderfully ready women are to heal by the laying on of hands and lips. My God, how healing. (59)

John's lines suggest the quality in women that is sought by all of Anderson's men: their healing power through sex. To heal is to restore life. The woman stops the man from killing himself, she listens to his story of guilt and by sharing it, lifts it from him. She lays on "hands and lips" in the act of sexual intercourse and he is absolved of guilt. But in order to prevent replacing one form of guilt with another, the act of sexual sacrifice by the woman must not be the result of pity. The man must not feel he is taking advantage of the woman. He must believe that she also feels a need and therefore the act is mutually benefiting. The women in the early plays bring this sense of mutual gratification to the relationship but only in a limited way. Laura says she needs Tom, that she has cried out
for him in her loneliness, but her need is monor compared to Tom's. Katherine tells John that she needs his comfort as much as he needs hers:

John: Please . . . I'm sick of pity.

Kath: Why do you have to give it a name? I want to hold you. I want you to hold me. (They are suddenly in each other's arms, kissing desperately, and holding each other with gratitude.) (63)

But John is not to receive this gift of compassion so easily. Katherine stops short of actual sexual contact at this point. She turns away from him in obvious conflict between what she feels and what she has been conditioned to believe is right and proper. John must gently press again for the full act of sexual involvement. He does not leave the room. He waits, then:

(He looks down at her for a moment. He leans over and strokes her hair, comforting her. He holds her head against his thigh. The passion is suddenly gone.) (63)

Katherine's breaking away from the passionate embrace is more than a device to increase the dramatic tension. What appears at first to be "soap-opera" teasing is in fact an integral part of the ritual. The sexual sacrifice must be devoid of passion or any erotic elements. The gesture must be one of compassion, not physical desire. John and Katherine are drawn together, just as Tom and Laura are, through his need to receive and her need to give compassion. The description of the embrace between John and Katherine uses the terms "desperately" and "with gratitude." Nowhere is the word "desire" used to indicate passion. The directions clearly state that all passion is gone.
Katherine is now ready to become the earth mother who sacrifices herself for the child in need. It is she who is moved by pity to "bestow a mercy." While both Laura and Katherine insist that they also need the man, the intensity of the man's overwhelming need overshadows any consideration the woman might have for herself. While John is in a situation similar to Katherine's husband, there is nowhere any imagery or reference that would suggest John has become a surrogate for her husband. The ritual is clearly one in which the woman is the agent of comfort and compassion while the man is the recipient. It is true that both the man and woman experience a form of death during the ritual but only the man experiences purgation. He dies and is purged of his guilt during sexual contact. The woman dies in that she loses her identity and becomes the surrogate for the man.

The ritualistic nature of the woman's role is emphasized by John's treatment of Katherine once the ritual is complete. When she has fulfilled her part in the action she is no longer essential and John begins to distance himself from her. Like the scapegoat, once she has assumed the burden of his guilt, she must be removed from him. He has not spent the entire night in her room but has returned to his own room and bolted the door between them. Katherine asks him:

Kath: Did you think that by getting up and going . . . did you think by doing that you could somehow turn me into a whore? (68)

Several of Anderson's women express the fear of becoming "whores." Katherine's mother was considered a whore by her father and Katherine has expressed to John a fear that she might become like her mother.
In *The Days Between*, Barbara expresses a similar fear. The woman's role in the ritual of sex makes her vulnerable to the label of whore. Like the scapegoat, in assuming the burden of the man's guilt she becomes contaminated and the object of degradation. The woman may rationalize that she has done a positive thing, but the man moves away from her nonetheless. John's locking the door against her is one suggestion of this as is his gift to her.

John: I would like to give you something--something silly to...

Kath: I'll remember.

John: I have nothing. (All he has found in his pocket is a penny) A penny. (He holds it out to show her)

Kath: (Reaching for it) I'll take that.

John: Give me something.

Kath: I have nothing either... (Reaches in her pocket) A handkerchief... (She holds it out. He takes it.) (73)

The giving of money, however small an amount, is suggestive of the payment of a prostitute. Both his closing of the door and his gift of money suggest John's attempt to withdraw from Katherine. He tells her:

John: A woman likes to hear the words, and I like to say them. Not to say them somehow leaves everything incomplete... But I've spoiled them for myself. It's the only honesty I have left. Not to call things by the wrong names... I would like to say how wonderful it would be to be married to you. But then I know I don't mean that. I have a wife I love as a wife. (60)

John does not need Katherine as a wife since he loves Jennifer in that way. He simply needs one facet of a wife. Jennifer cannot provide comfort and compassion through sex. She cannot relieve the guilt
he feels, therefore, he must turn to other women such as Katherine. Now that Katherine has served her function, she is no longer needed and he returns once again to the ideal wife, Jennifer. As the projected anima, Katherine has given John a sense of completeness, a sense of his total self, whole again. He has also deposited with her his feelings of guilt which she will now take away with her. This is the primary function of the ritual, to relieve at least temporarily the feelings of guilt, the fear of isolation and separateness. John has experienced a closeness to Jennifer through Katherine as surrogate and he can now return to Jennifer with a renewed sense of love for her.

John's rejection of Katherine, no matter how essential to the ritual, makes Silent Night, Lonely Night an unhappy play. John is not a very likeable character because his attitude toward Katherine is basically unfeeling in spite of his seeming concern for her in the beginning. The early part of the play has been primarily his attempt to persuade Katherine to meet his needs and once she meets them, he turns away from her. Katherine's relinquishing of her moral code and her sacrifice for John have given him a momentary sense of release, but there is no indication of any lasting change in his life. His conversation with Jennifer at the close of the play indicates that he is as trapped in his relationship with her as he was in the beginning. Katherine has a new awareness of the act of sex as a means of giving comfort, but John is basically the same and one has the feeling that in another few days or weeks he will seek out another surrogate and the ritual will begin again for him.
For Katherine there has been a permanent change in her understanding of others. She now can accept her husband's infidelities and will, we assume, be able to accept others in the future. In fact, Katherine has now joined ranks with the other lonely people who find momentary release through sexual affairs. She has lost her rigid moral code and now accepts life with more compassion, but the question remains; has she benefited from the experience? The one who benefits most is her husband who can now continue his affairs without guilt since Katherine now understands and forgives him.

Two other women are of importance in this play although only one of them appears on stage. The young bride, Janet, introduces qualities that will be seen in women in later plays. While Katherine looks back to Laura in *Tea and Sympathy*, Janet looks forward to Barbara in *The Days Between*. She illustrates an important theme in Anderson's works; the role of the woman in the inevitable disillusionment of marriage.

Love cannot survive the realities of day-to-day life. As Katherine says of her marriage:

Kath: We'd had a wonderful relationship, and we didn't want it to end. But it did end with marriage, in a sense, with the first bills and responsibilities. (45)

The wife's part in this disillusionment is suggested by Janet. She appears, at first, to be a romantic who can see only the simple life she and her husband will lead.

Janet: I'll take orange crates and a big house full of books and records and children. (25)

But there is another side to Janet. She is, in fact, a realist and a somewhat harsh one. She says of Philip's job:
Janet: . . . we don't try to pretend that it's of earthshaking importance. It's a means to an end. If Philip and I can live the kind of life we want on some slogan that he dreams up, what's wrong with that? (26)

Philip's work is a means to an end and she sees no value in it as a means of fulfillment for him. This attitude is more clearly indicated in her next statement:

Janet: . . . He wanted to be a concert pianist, but his father talked him out of it. But we're going to have a piano. His mother is giving us one and it can always be a hobby for him. (27)

Philip is a young man who wanted to devote his life to a creative art. He has given it up under pressure from his father, much like the pressure Gene feels in I Never Sang For My Father and Tom feels in Tea and Sympathy. Philip's mother is the understanding parent and consoles her son by giving him a piano. The mother in this play is very similar to Gene's mother in I Never Sang For My Father in that she supports her son's artistic talents. Mother's are always the source of comfort and father's the cause of tension in Anderson's plays.

Wives are not necessarily as understanding or supportive as mothers. Janet accepts the necessity of Philip's giving up the piano. She relegates it to the level of "a hobby." In this rather calloused attitude she is similar to many other wives in the other plays. They are the symbols of reality, of the day-to-day necessities required by life. Because of their constant reminder of this reality, they are not sympathetic characters. We identify with the romantic men who seek to escape the drudgery of life and react negatively to the women who constantly force us back into reality. Our sympathy goes out to Philip because we can see the bleakness of his future.
The realistic quality of Janet's character is further emphasized by her decision not to splurge on a honeymoon. Philip lets it slip that they have been spending weekends together at the inn before they were married. Janet says that this is why she doesn't want to spend money for a honeymoon. They have already passed the first intensity of sexual love and she is slowly eliminating the romance from their lives. Philip would willingly spend the money for a more romantic honeymoon, but Janet wants to save the money for "something permanent."

Janet is the first in a series of realistic women who are unfeeling and unresponsive to the needs of the man. Philip is another example of the passive male who allows the woman to take the active part in the relationship. He has very few lines compared to Janet's almost constant "chatter." He accepts the decisions she has made concerning their present and future life and although these decisions are not in his best interest, he makes no protest.

The third woman of importance in this play is Jennifer, John's wife. Although she does not appear on stage, her character has great bearing on the action. We know her only through what John reveals in his lines. In these references we can see the ritualistic nature of her role for him. When Katherine asks if there is a chance his wife will get well, John tells her:

John: No. But when the doctors all say "no," you begin to believe in mysteries, superstitions. You remember, "If I can walk home without stepping on a crack in the sidewalk . . ." (60)
This is a conscious use of the magic of ritual. It is similar to the giving of gifts, the celebration of an anniversary, the sharing of food, and other repetitive patterns which are believed to have the magical power to create that which is desired. If I buy you a gift then I have created love. If I write of love then it is true. The sex act is the most powerful ritualistic activity because, for Anderson's men, sex creates love and a sense of life in the face of death and isolation. The same ritualistic power is evident in John's next speech.

John: . . . I began to think that as long as I didn't love anyone else, or sleep with anyone I cared about, she somehow would know I loved her and get well. (60)

Just as avoiding stepping on a crack has magical power, so does avoiding meaningful contact. It becomes a form of sacrifice since to avoid sexual fulfillment is to risk death in an emotional sense. Because he feels guilty for his wife's living death, he imposes a similar living death on himself.

The healing nature of love is also suggested in these lines. John believes that Jennifer would get well if she could only know he loves her. This is one reason he continues to worship her even though she begs him for an annulment of their marriage. He cannot give up his belief in the magic healing of love. For Anderson's men, love can make any situation right if only one can find the right intensity of feeling.

John tells Katherine that his wife has asked for an annulment of their marriage, a legal possibility after a person has been continuously insane for five years:

John: Every time I've come up here the last months when she's been halfway . . . right, she's said she would manage, in some way she would manage to kill herself if I didn't get
an annulment . . . that she is ruining my life . . .
How can I make her see that now she is my life? She is
the condition of my life. How can I make her see that
the more I tried to destroy the meaning of marriage, the
closer I came to its true meaning? . . . Maybe it's guilt
that binds me. I think it's love. (61)

Much that is at the heart of Anderson's writing is contained in
these lines. There are themes here that are repeated in several other
works. The sense of guilt on the part of the wife is caused by a
feeling she is "ruining" her husband's life. This sense of responsi-
bility for the husband's happiness is felt by many of Anderson's women.
Their feelings of guilt are caused by the husband's devotion to romantic
ideals that the wife cannot share or be a part of. In Silent Night,
Lonely Night, this romantic idealism takes the form of total dedication
to a dying wife. The husband's own sense of guilt demands this devotion.
He makes his wife the "condition" of his life, the primary reason for
his being. Several female characters also refer to their husbands as
the "condition" of their life, but this occurs only in the first three
works. It continues in the male characters throughout all of the plays.

The cycle of interdependence between men and women is central to
Anderson's work. In spite of the fact that his men so desperately
need their wives love, they very frequently have extramarital affairs.
The affairs increase the sense of separation from the spouse and cause
feelings of guilt as well. Guilt and isolation lead to an intensifi-
cation of the need for contact and the man becomes devoted to his wife
again. The devotion causes the wife to feel burdened and she with-
draws sending the man to seek comfort in other affairs. This un-
ending cycle is an inescapable web for the characters in the plays
and accounts for much of the pessimistic feeling in such works as *Silent Night, Lonely Night* and *The Days Between*.

John gives the annulment papers to Jennifer in what seems a gesture of resignation to her request. It appears at first to be an action designed to lift from her the burden of responsibility for his life, but he qualifies the action in such a way that it becomes meaningless:

John: When I gave it to her, she was calm and smiling. I knelt down beside her and said, "Here it is. It's what you wanted. But as far as I'm concerned, I'm still married to you. I couldn't live without you."

... She said, "No, Jack. No. Don't say that. No."

(61-62)

John's gesture, while fulfilling his sense of devotion does not decrease Jennifer's sense of responsibility. She must continue to bear the burden for his unhappiness and it is this that sends her back into her sickness. In *Tea and Sympathy*, Laura willingly allowed Tom to deposit the burden of his life with her. Jennifer refuses to do so.

John continues to explain the terrible circumstances of his life and in so doing reveals much about Jennifer:

Kath: You must have loved her very much.

John: Yes, and also hated her very much too, I imagine. ...
"Who are you sleeping with, Jack?" She asks. I try not to answer, but she knows. She knows me. She loved it in me, the reaching out, the need to be part of a woman's life. (62)

John's need to be part of a woman's life is denied him because of Jennifer's illness. She is aware of this and it is for this reason she asks for the annulment. When Katherine asks John what he answers
when she asks who he is sleeping with, he says: "No one I can care for . . . and she cries." (63) John has placed on Jennifer a terrible burden. She must assume responsibility for his unhappiness but she is helpless to do anything about it. In asking to be freed from this burden she is trying to escape the guilt she feels. But John's own guilt for her condition demands that he continue his unfailing devotion to her. Thus they are caught; the inescapable web holds them both.

In all of the plays, Anderson's characters are more pathetic than tragic. They have no control over what happens but are merely unfortunate victims of circumstances. They are unable to break out of this web of guilt and thus their love is often more selfish than selfless. They are more concerned with appeasing their own feelings of guilt than in releasing the loved one from the burden of responsibility.

*Silent Night, Lonely Night* continues the image of the earth mother as compassionate and self-sacrificing. It introduces two new images of women; the madonna figure who is worshipped and adored but who evokes a sense of guilt, and the realistic woman who represents the harsh reality of day-to-day life. The most significant change, however, is the growing reluctance of the woman to play her ritual role. Katherine must be persuaded to this role and Jennifer openly tries to withdraw from it.

The ritual is fulfilled in this play, but less satisfactorily than in *Tea and Sympathy*. John experiences a sense of purgation from guilt and a redemption of sorts, but neither are complete or lasting.
The ritual must be played out with a surrogate rather than the real wife, the man must ask for comfort and compassion rather than having it freely given, and the darker side of the woman begins to emerge. Janet is harsh and unfeeling and Jennifer pleads for an end to her ritual role. The women are already becoming disenchanted with the role of the ideal woman. As this role narrows and restricts her, she becomes trapped in the inescapable web of interdependence.
BARBARA: THE TRAPPED WOMAN

In The Days Between the web of dependency has trapped both the man and the woman. Their relationship is balanced like a scales. If either partner attempts to change and thus tip the balance, the other feels threatened and must do whatever is necessary to reestablish the balance.

Barbara is trapped in her relationship with David. She has no identity apart from it and therefore she must do whatever is necessary to preserve the status quo. David has been dependent on her in the past but as he progresses as a writer he threatens to break away from her. Because Barbara's identity depends entirely on David, to lose him would be a form of death. In this play, Barbara is the character who is fighting for life.

The Days Between is a play about death and killing and is Anderson's most uncompromising look at the male-female relationship. It is a play about a confrontation between two people who destroy their illusions and in the process kill something of themselves. A critic writing for Saturday Review said:

... the feeling emerges that this is a struggle waged by an entire household to survive the disease that plagues it.

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1 Robert Anderson, The Days Between, (New York: Samuel French Inc., 1961) This is the final acting version of the play.

David Ives has written one successful novel and for fifteen years has tried to write a second one. In order to support his wife, son, and mother-in-law during this time, he has turned to teaching. When the play opens David is looking forward to a summer free from the teaching which he finds frustrating and unrewarding. He plans to write the second book which he says "is coming." The pressure of this undertaking has created great tension within the family. David is euphoric and ready to celebrate before the book is finished. Barbara is skeptical that the book will ever be written and she is terrified of what a failure will do to David and their marriage. She refuses to join David in his premature celebration and in desperation he threatens to leave her in order to prove his ability as a writer.

Into the conflict comes Ted Sears, a successful writer whom David envies and resents. Barbara was at one time a close friend of Ted's wife who has died. During the final illness Barbara visited in their home and was drawn to Ted and his loving care of his wife, Meg. Now Ted has come to Barbara for comfort in his loneliness.

Barbara and David are both threatened by the idea of separation from one another. Barbara, in a desperate attempt to hold David, tells him she has killed an unwanted second child in order to prevent adding to the burden he must already support. David, in turn, destroys his manuscripts as an act of penance. Stripped of all illusions and unable to continue without each other, they are reunited at the end of the play.
There is none of the gentleness, compassion or love in this play that was found in Tea and Sympathy or Silent Night, Lonely Night. The images and the language of the play are of killing, rape, hatred, and death. The women in the play reflect this destructive theme. Barbara is the most negative of Anderson's major female characters. Her image is that of the terrible mother who destroys in order to re-create.

Anderson has said that he wanted this play to reflect the woman's point of view:

... I think around forty or forty-five, most men, if they grow up, realize that it's too late to start over (not that some haven't of course) but this is, what I call in the play, a desperate period for a man. And I was fascinated, not to consider it from the man's point of view, but from the viewpoint of the woman who is married to such a man ... What does it do to her life, to their life, to the children's lives when he suddenly finds himself in a rut, not doing what he wanted to do ... wanting to live only days of glory and not the days between ... 3

The play, however, is not written from the wife's point of view even though she is central to the action. The play is David's. There are several reasons for this. David has a great many more lines than Barbara, particularly in the first half of the play. He is given several long monologues which are spoken almost directly to the audience in the style of a soliloquy. These speeches reveal, very early in the action, David's inner thoughts and character. Because his character is established so completely and so early, the audience identifies with him. He is a charming, romantic figure who feels the desperateness of his situation and conveys this desperation to the

audience. We identify so closely with David that Barbara is never able
to balance the scales.

In the following example, David is speaking to George, a young
student who has come to see him. As he speaks we cannot help but
sympathize with the dedication and frustration of the artist and with
David in particular.

George: I don't want to embarrass you, but I guess I'm consciously
or unconsciously trying to pattern things after you and
what you have here. . . . It always seemed to me a won­
erful life . . . How does it sound? . . . If the next book
sells, I can give up teaching, if I want to. . . .

David: I don't know what to say to you, George. . . . You want
to talk to me about writing, or an approach to writing,
or something like that, I feel competent . . . But I
don't know what to say to you. . . . Every may has to
decide these things for himself, depending on the pres­
sures of the moment. You're in love, and that's wonder­
ful . . . And you want to get married, and that's mar­
velous. . . . Who am I to give advice on these things?
. . . But when you talk about me . . . your picture of
me, I have a right there. I have an obligation, to be
honest. (He looks at George a long moment.) For me,
George, this is no place. . . . This is nothing. . . .
This is . . . death. Now, look, that's not to say I
didn't get a kick out of teaching someone like you . . .
but . . . well, I didn't make it work. But now it's
different. . . . This summer. I worked like a son of a
bitch all year, extra classes, tutoring, reviewing books,
so I wouldn't have to teach this summer, or hopefully in
the fall, or ever again . . . and I'm writing the book.

George: Mrs. Ives said you were.

David: And it's started coming, I think, I pray . . . today.
I think I licked the ABC's . . . the overall form.

George: That's great.

David: Yes. . . . But it's been rough on everyone in that house.
Because, George . . . it's an awful thing to say, but I
hate them. . . . Sometimes I'd like to be far away, and
never have heard of them. . . . This bunch of flowers the
kid's getting is to go with a letter I've written, of apology. . . . and hope. . . . and an invitation to celebrate a little. . . . to fly a little. . . . (He hasn't been looking at George, at the end, he goes on, almost as though explaining, justifying himself, but no petulance.) Nobody but a writer understands the conditions under which you have to work. . . . the ruthless self-discipline. . . . the freedom you need. . . . They measure out their days in small things of life. . . . They don't, they can't realize that any day a writer hasn't written something good is a lost day. . . . that makes the next day that much more desperate. And when the days become weeks and the weeks months and years. . . . Nobody can understand the. . . . the fear, the panic that you might never write another line. . . . Never earn another dollar. So you become stingy, and every expense becomes a threat. But there are expenses to living, and one part of you knows that. . . . the part that is loving and needful. The family part. The other part. The artist rejects it, resents the family man and his softness. Yells at him. "You're no artist. You're a miserable compromiser, and that's what you'll end up. Drowned in anonymous crud like everyone else." And you hope he'll go away, this voice, and leave you alone. But he won't, if you're an artist. And don't expect anyone to understand. . . . Less than understand. Your wife will be jealous of your art, and who can blame her? She will set traps, gentle, loving traps. Oh, so gentle. . . . for the husband. . . . the lover in you. . . . You are Ulysses and she is Circe. . . . and her song and her loveliness are beguiling. . . . To relax, to say, "Yes, yes, that's all I want. Just to live like everyone else." . . . But the other voice is there, and lashes you to the mast. . . . The difference is, Ulysses passed the island once. . . . The artist never passes it, never is rid of it. . . . He keeps going round and around it all his life. . . . hearing the voice of the siren. . . . And he wants to give up, over and over. . . . But he can never give up. What the hell would he be if he gave up? Nothing! (He says the last in loathing. Suddenly he realizes he has been carried away.) George, I can't give you any advice. You'll do what you'll have to do. . . . You ask a middle-aged man for advice, you're likely to get a lot of sour resentment. (12-14)

Because this speech comes very early in the play and reveals such deep emotions, it creates a sympathy for David that is never established
for Barbara. She has no speeches of such length nor any that reveal true depth of character.

Ayers has written of David:

Since the turmoil of the play stems from him, and because the story is written from the wife's point of view, this character is potentially unsympathetic.4

On the contrary, there is in David something that comes close to tragic proportions. He is a man with flaws; overly romantic, insensitive at times, slightly ridiculous in his passion, but nevertheless, he commands our respect because of his uncompromising dedication to a dream. In the theatre our heroes are often larger than life and extreme in their emotions. Inherent in such extremes are the seeds of destruction, and this is true of David. His dedication to his art is his undoing.

Anderson's description of David supports this view. In his notes to the APT producers he says:

In the casting it is important that the man who plays David be an attractive personality . . . that he have a kind of physical quality about him . . . that he be capable of these swings from ardent love and passion, to ardent rages . . . poetic rages. When he says "If I eat, it will be because I am a writer . . ." we must feel the dedication in him as well as the desperation. He must be a man with a certain "blackness" in him, if you see what I mean . . . if he is a bland man, he becomes petulant, unattractive, and dangerous. Vitality, energy, seriousness . . . yet someone who could sweep a girl away and make her forget all the meanness in one night . . . for one night. Forgive me for mentioning names, but it is often the easiest short-cut . . . A Richard Burton . . . John Garfield . . . Brando . . . He is described as a boy from the streets . . . there must be this offbeat attractiveness and drive about him.5

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4Ayers, The Apprenticeship of Robert Anderson, p. 211.

One can hardly see Burton, Garfield or Brando as unsympathetic characters. They could be villains, wrong, or mistaken, but such characters are too strong to deny audience identification. David's excessive romanticism is certainly his undoing, but it is also the quality that makes him a hero who is to be admired and yet pitied. Because the audience identifies so completely with his passion, he dominates the play.

Barbara, on the other hand, has very few lines and little opportunity to establish her point of view. In the first half of the play we have virtually no insight into her character. In Act II we discover more of her feelings and motivation but much of this is provided by Ted Sears. Barbara's lines are devoted primarily to a discussion of David rather than herself. The result is that the play is heavily weighted toward David.

Barbara's role in the play is as agent for David's destruction. It is this that makes her into the archetypal image of the terrible mother. No matter how necessary or justified her destruction of David's dream, it is a sad and frightening act. We cannot separate her from what she does and therefore her character is predominantly negative. Her major actions in the play are the destruction of David's dream and the killing of her own child. While the abortion takes place before the play opens, it is so dominant that it forms much of her character. She is a woman who destroys life as well as creates it.

There is one major pattern of movement in the play. As in the earlier plays the central progression is from life to death and rebirth.
There are three minor patterns of movement as well. The first is temporal; from evening, through night, to dawn. The second is psychological; from high or "flying" to low or "crud." The third is spatial; Barbara moves from the guest room which is linked to Ted, to the bedroom she shares with David indicating her choice of the two men.

In The Days Between Anderson has moved away from the realistic staging of the earlier plays. He uses instead the open-space technique of the theatre-in-the-round. Space, however, is linked to character and the movement through space suggests changing relationships.

There are three main areas; the house with David and Barbara's bedroom, the guest room which is over the barn, and the yard area between. The room over the barn is associated with Ted Sears while the yard is a neutral area. As the play begins, lights come up on Barbara who is in the guest room. The lights come up next on David who is in his attic workroom. Anderson establishes relationships in this opening scene. Barbara is in Ted's space "sitting on the bed, her head turned to look at the pillow" (5) David is at his work, literally above the rest of the world, out of touch, his head in the clouds. The developments in the action are reflected in the character's movement through space. Barbara begins in Ted's space because she is strongly drawn to him and what he represents. As the play progresses, David is brought down from his isolated tower and Barbara leaves Ted's space for the bedroom she shares with David. Such movement reflects their inner development.
The up-down imagery in the play is of importance not only as a pattern of movement, but as the symbol of David's destruction. David's mental as well as his physical situation at the beginning of the play is "up." He works in the attic and has visions of "flying" and "soaring" with happiness. As he comes to a realization of the truth of his situation and as he sees his dreams torn apart, he "sinks to the floor, trying to shrink himself in on himself." (57) By the end of the play he has been brought down completely. In the great moment of crisis for David; "... his head goes all the way to the floor as he cries." (57)

There are two primary images that reflect this up-down movement.

The first is that of flying. Early in the play David says to Barbara:

David: God, Barbara, I want to fly. Fly with me, Barbara. ... Oh, don't say anything. Whatever you're going to say, please forget it. Please. ... I know it's wrong to just rush at you like this and ask you to forget everything. But I am. I've got it licked, and it's going to be different. It's got to be different. (Barbara's tears subside a bit, but she is still crying.) Jesus, I can't stand to see you cry. I know how it's been. But that's over. When the book is done, we'll burn down this house and every piece of meanness that's in it. ... No more lousy teaching. No more betrayal. ... Only love, endless love like it used to be. (17)

Later he tells her:

David: Oh, Barbara, I want to write from morn to midnight and midnight to morn. And if I eat, it will be because I am a writer ... and if I die, it will be because I am a writer ... Fifteen years ago, on a beach, when everything was promises and beginnings, I said something like this to you ... and we both soared on the words ... (38)
The images of flying and soaring are constantly associated with David. They represent his romantic spirit. In contrast to these images are the references to "crud" and "crap". They indicate David's revulsion toward anything mediocre. He calls Ted Sears a "crap" artist and tells Barbara:

David: Do you think I could have loved you that way if I'd felt that this was all I was going to be? . . . It was the promise that I wouldn't be like all the other cruddy people that gave me . . . (He can't express strength, virility, power) that made us talk that way. (20)

He tells Roger that:

David: . . . a man's life gets up to here with crud. We weren't sent on this earth just to pay bills, count our change and live in crud. (16)

The most important image associated with the up-down pattern is that of the kamikaze. Roger has been to a war movie and tells Ted about some of the scenes:

Roger: (It) Had some real shots of . . . uh . . . kami--some­thing or other.

Ted: Kamikazes . . . suicide planes. (51)

This reference follows immediately after Mrs. Walker has expressed fear that Barbara will try to commit suicide. The two references link Barbara and the "suicide planes" or Kamikazes. David is linked to the ship which is destroyed. Ted tells Roger, "Your Dad's ship was sunk there." (51)

With Barbara linked to the planes and David to the ship, the imagery suggests that Barbara destroys David. She does bring David to reality. But the imagery of the Kamikazes has another aspect to
it. The pilot of the suicide plane destroys himself in destroying the ship. Barbara, in destroying David's dream, must also destroy something of herself.

The images of flowers and eating appear in this play and are of significance in establishing the image of woman. Flowers are of particular importance. When we first see Barbara in Ted's room she "absent-mindedly reaches out and moves a bud vase with one flower in it . . ." (5) The flower is a symbol of love and Barbara has brought this one to Ted's room as an expression of her feelings for him and for his marriage.

Flowers are more often gifts from the men to the women. Early in the play, Barbara sets up the flower imagery that is linked to her. David's first book was dedicated to "Barbara and her violet eyes . . ." (8) She explains that:

Barb: . . . when we first met . . . right after he'd come back from the war, he had a favorite quotation . . . something like, "If you have only two loaves of bread left to your name, sell one and with the money buy violets to feed your soul." (8)

Barbara with her "violet eyes" becomes food for the soul. She is the hoped for source of life. Later David outlines clearly this flower imagery. He tells Roger about the flowers he used to bring Barbara:

David: I used to know all about flowers . . . Oh, I couldn't arrange them, or grow them like you . . . but when your mother and I were courting, there was a flower shop on the corner where she lived . . . and I'd always bring something. Maybe just one flower, but always something with style . . . Remember style, Roge . . . a man's life gets up to here with crud. We weren't sent on this earth just to pay bills, count our change and live in crud.
He smiles, embarrassed that he's been carried away. He gets out a bottle of whiskey during the next, and pours himself a good drink, and goes on.) I remember one time, I brought her just one white violet wrapped in wax paper. . . . But whatever it was, whatever flower, it had to be perfect . . . because your mother was perfect. (16)

The single perfect flower represents Barbara's perfection in David's eyes and his adoration of her. Inherent in the image, although not verbalized, is the wilting of flowers. At this point in the play we know there is something wrong in the relationship between Barbara and David. We discover during the play that the first intense happiness of marriage has gaded away. David, like all of Anderson's men, wants to recreate that first intensity of love. He attempts to do so by the ritual of giving flowers, eating, remembering an anniversary. This is why David reacts with such anger when he discovers Barbara has invited Ted Sears for dinner and that Ted has sent her flowers. He realizes that she is sharing these intimate rituals with another man.

David: You're all set for him, aren't you? Lobster, wine . . . (He ticks them off on his way out, and then comes across a wrapped bouquet of flowers.) And what's this? . . . flowers.

Barb: He ordered them. The florist saw me passing and--

David: Hell, then, we don't need these. (He picks up his own bowl of flowers.)

Barb: (Rushing to stop him.) David.

David: (Slams the bowl of flowers into the corner. Barbara turns away, almost as though hit herself.) (21)

These same flowers have a second significance for Barbara. They signal her acceptance of the role of surrogate wife for Ted. When he arrives, she thanks him for the flowers and explains that the florist
asked her what she'd like and; "... I asked for stock, because I knew it was Meg's favorite." (33) Choosing the flowers that had been the favorite of Ted's dead wife puts Barbara in the position of surrogate wife to Ted. We will see, however, that she does not carry this role to its conclusion.

Anderson uses special celebrations again in this play in order to heighten the emotional level. David tells Roger that he is celebrating his wedding anniversary three days early. "I've decided it's going to be tonight. By the authority vested in me as head of this household." (15) Barbara justifies her concern for Ted because it is his anniversary also.

Barb: This happens to be ... not three days away ... this day is his anniversary. If Meg had lived, this would have been their eighteenth anniversary. I wanted to try ... I thought he'd be lonely. (21)

Barbara's lines suggest the importance of these special days. She, like all of Anderson's major women, responds to the loneliness and need in the man. Such special celebrations accentuate the need and loneliness.

The images of flowers, eating and up-down are all important because they reveal the underlying ritual pattern of the play. But the most important images in revealing the ritual are those of death and killing. This is a play about killing. Words that refer directly to killing or death occur forty-two times. Of all of Anderson's works, it uses images of violence and destruction more than any other.
Every character in the play is touched by death. Mrs. Walker, Barbara's mother, has been deserted by her husband whose absence is a form of living death. Mrs. Walker's own isolation is a form of death. Roger tells Ted that his dog died and that "it was terrible." 

(28) Ted Sear's wife is dead. But it is psychological death and killing, not actual death, that is the central image of the play. And these images are linked most closely with David and Barbara. From the opening lines this imagery is apparent:

Mrs. Walker: If he doesn't get his book written he will die. (7)

Barbara: You would have killed me if I'd interrupted your work.

David: Sure, I go around killing people. (18)

David: This is failure, betrayal, compromise and death! (20)

David: I'm terrified, that if I stayed, I would kill you . . . I would kill us both. (41)

By the end of the play, the speeches are filled with such images.

Barbara: I want to die. Can't you let me die? (54)

Barbara: . . . I won't come to see if you've killed yourself . . . because I'll know . . . Without coming, I'll know that you have killed yourself. (56)

Barbara: I killed a child for you. Yes . . . I killed a child for you . . . (57)
David: I thought I would kill myself. Because I find this life intolerable without that dream... I still do. That is not changed... And when the papers were all destroyed, I lay down to die... in self-contempt and despair...
... But I couldn't die. (62)

In order to understand this ritual of killing and death one must examine the roles that David and Barbara play; not just in the final action, but in the context of their entire married life. For the tragedy that besets David and Barbara is not the result of David's romantic dream, but is rather the result of their complete and total dependence on one another. Like all of Anderson's men and women, they are dependent on another person for their sense of life and identity. Without the partner to complete their view of themselves, they are half-people. Thus the partner becomes essential to life. This is another example of the projection of the anima and animus images. One is completely dependent on the partner for a sense of wholeness. Such dependence means that any change in this balance is seen as a threat.

In the previous two plays the man has been the one who relied most on the partner for completion. Tom literally cannot survive without Laura's protection and life-giving sacrifice. John relies on relationships with surrogate wives because a sexual relationship is essential to his masculine self-image. He is unable to annul his marriage because to lose Jennifer is to lose his identity as the loving husband. Both facets of his self are essential; therefore he is caught between two worlds, neither able to fulfill his needs completely.
The women in the earlier plays express needs that are much less demanding than the men's. This greater need on the part of the man makes him more vulnerable and dependent than the woman. But in this play, the woman is equally as dependent as the man. As Ayer points out:

Early in her marriage, when she supported David so that he could spend full time at his writing, Barbara Ives worked as a receptionist. This information and the fact that she cannot spell correctly and that she fears she could not support herself suggest a more limited education than earlier Anderson heroines. Barbara is convinced she could not survive without David. He has given her identity by choosing her in the first place.

Barbara: No one had ever loved me before. I was not, am not, pretty or beautiful. But he loved what he called the interesting planes in my face, and my eyes. He always insisted they were violet when they're blue. . . . And in return for loving me, I wanted to give him a gift he seemed to want so desperately . . . that he could be a brilliant success. (44)

Barbara's lines reveal two important thoughts; first, that love is something one should be grateful for, essentially because it brings life. Like many of Anderson's early women, Barbara is a Sleeping Beauty waiting for the magical kiss of the Prince. Until such women are chosen by a man, their life has little meaning. Therefore their gratitude in being chosen is understandable. The second thought is that one person can fulfill the life of another. Barbara wants to make David a brilliant success. This is her gift to him but she is trying to take upon herself a responsibility she cannot possibly meet. Only David can determine his life, but Barbara blames herself

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for his failure. In the earlier plays the man wants to deposit his life with the woman. In this play the woman insists that the man leave his life in her hands.

Barbara is drawn to David initially out of gratitude but she must hold on to him out of fear. She tells Ted:

Barb: This seems cheap to me to hang on to a man because you're afraid . . . to be alone . . . or afraid no man will ever love you again . . . (47)

But these are exactly the reasons she does hold on to David. She is afraid to be alone because loneliness means death. The only escape is through the man who chooses to love her.

Mrs. Walker, Barbara's mother, functions in the play as a constant reminder of what happens to a woman who is without a man. Barbara tells Ted:

Barbara: . . . When I was eight, one night my father walked out the front door and never came back. My mother went into her room and didn't come out till two days later. When she did, her hair was white. (46-47)

The incident has all the elements of a Gothic horror story; the tragedy being that any individual can be so dependent on another that their life ends when that person leaves.

Later, Barbara tells Ted about a friend whose husband has died.

Barbara: It's grotesque, but soon after he died, she thought she was being eaten alive . . . by . . . mites. Little invisible insects . . . She clawed and scraped at herself, and when no doctor could find any mites on her, she collected these little things in a jar to show him they were real . . . They were only little specks of dust . . . (She suddenly blurts out.) I am terrified of that kind of freedom. (48)
The warning in both of these stories is very clear; women alone are in terrible danger. They are threatened with loneliness, fear, and emotional destruction. To lose one's husband is to lose one's life. But women are particularly vulnerable sexually in that they are always in danger of becoming "whores." Mrs. Walker tells Barbara:

Mrs. Walker: I sit in those beauty parlors and I hear women say casually, "Oh, what I wouldn't give to be free." What do they think they're going to find? They're going to find loneliness, that's what they're going to find. And they'll do anything to get away from loneliness, and they hope each man will marry them, only he doesn't. And then comes God only knows what . . .

Later Barbara tells Ted:

Barbara: I hate my mother because she taught me fear . . . because she had a heart attack and brought another mouth to feed . . . because she wants me to crawl . . . because she says I'd become a whore if I'm left alone . . . and she's right. The nights I've lain in bed crying for an end to desire. But it never comes . . . (54)

The message is clear, any woman who responds to her sexual needs is no better than a whore unless she is responding to the needs of a lonely man. In so doing, she raises sex to the level of purity and acceptability. When Barbara questions Ted on the matter, he stresses this need for loneliness as justification for sexual activity:

Barb: You've known many women. And that's true, I suppose. Isn't it?

Ted: It's true of men too.

Barb: . . . And is he ashamed afterward: Is he ashamed of the women he has been with for loneliness?

Ted: No . . . immensely grateful. (47)
It is acceptable to respond to loneliness as Laura and Katherine do. Any other response turns the woman into a whore.

Barbara's intellectual shortcomings are also used as a means of keeping her dependent on David. Her inability to spell is mentioned twice and is emphasized in some detail:

Roger: I can't even spell. Mom can't spell, either. She does all right on three-letter words, but after that—wow. She has to write it all out in pencil, then she looks up most of the words, and then she copies it in ink. (29)

And later Barbara tells Ted:

Barb: Oh, I can't write letters. I can't even spell a word over one syllable. Yesterday I even spelled "those": T-H-O-E-S. (34)

The reference is not simply a passing remark to the effect that she isn't very good at spelling, but is an extended reference to show just how really bad she is. This emphasis on her inability to write correctly suggests that she is generally incompetent and would be unable to support herself without David. It is important that her dependence be clearly established because it is not David's dream that threatens Barbara, but the threat of the dream becoming reality. She is so completely dependent on him that she cannot afford to lose his mutual dependence on her. This romantic, impractical dream is exactly what Barbara wants for David. For fifteen years she has supported it even though there has been no indication that David was writing the second book. Now he has a summer free and says the book is coming, that he is writing at last. He tells both George and Barbara that he has it "licked." It is interesting that we never know
whether David is in fact writing the book. He says he is, but Roger says he has been in the study and "there was nothing." (24) Roger, however, obviously hates his father and we cannot rely on his report. It is quite possible also that preparatory work such as notes would not be recognized by a child of Roger's age.

The point concerning the writing of the book is an important one. As long as David depends on Barbara for support while he struggles with his novel, she feels secure since she is essential to his life. What happens to Barbara's place if the second novel is completed and he is a success? Will he continue to need her to support the dream which has become a reality? Barbara's entire identity relies on David's need for her. His threat to leave is devastating because it threatens her with loss of identity and psychological death. Therefore the closer David comes to completing the novel and making the dream a reality, the more threatened Barbara feels. It is essential that she prevent his success.

With this in mind, many other points become clear. Why does Barbara consider Ted's marriage perfect? She tells Ted "I've never seen anyone more devoted than you were." (34) Later she says:

Barb: I know it was a terrible time for both of you, with her so sick... but in a strange way I found it wonderfully... inspiring, watching you and her. I fell in love with your marriage. (35)

Barbara is envious of Ted's marriage because she sees in it the husband's absolute and total dedication to the wife. She seeks this same dedication from David because it ensures her own identity. This
need to reinforce David's dependence is one quality that gives Barbara's character a negative connotation. She is, ultimately, the terrible mother who destroys the man's virility in order to keep him child-like and dependent on her. Barbara does destroy David's manhood and her act is as much a symbolic castration as Laura's suggestion that Bill is a homosexual.

Women represent the demands of everyday life that drain away the man's creative powers. It is this that David refers to when he calls Barbara a 'Circe.' His description of her power is a frightening and revealing look at the man's image of woman as the source of death:

David: Your wife will be jealous of your art, and who can blame her? She will set traps, gentle, loving traps. Oh, so gentle . . . for the husband . . . the lover in you . . . You are Ulysses and she is Circe . . . and her song and her loveliness are beguiling. . . . To relax, to say, "Yes, yes, that's all I want. Just to live like everyone else." But the other voice is there, and latches you to the mast. . . . The difference is, Ulysses passed the island once. . . . The artist never passes it, never is rid of it . . . He keeps going round and around it all his life . . . hearing the voice of the siren. . . . (13-14)

The woman constantly calls the man to "settle," to become part of the everyday life, to accept the inevitable mediocrity of life. The man continues to fight back. He refuses to accept and thus is more heroic than the woman. This pattern is seen in all of Anderson's plays, but most clearly in this one and in Double Solitaire.

When David tells Barbara that their early dreams were a "promise that I wouldn't be like all the other cruddy people . . ." (20), she answers; "All kids do that." He replies; "You mean we're not kids. . . . Settle. . . . Settle for this . . ." (20) Barbara realizes that she has forced David to accept reality and "settle" and tells Ted:
Barb: . . . we were married and descended on Mecca . . . New York, New York. And then, nothing. . . . He could have gotten along on peanut butter sandwiches by himself. But he was a gentleman and couldn't stand to see me starve. And my getting a job as a receptionist didn't work. It killed him taking money from me on Fridays. . . . I'd try to avoid handing it to him . . . I'd try to leave it on a table with a note, and then stay out till he'd come in and picked it up. . . . But it didn't work, so he got this job teaching up here . . . planning to write evenings and weekends. From then on he has had an excuse for not writing. And I did it with my little bow and arrow. (44-45)

Barbara's account of their early years indicates that, even then, the element of ritual was essential to their lives. The most practical solutions to relatively simple problems become impossible because they conflict with the requirements of the ritual. There is no suggestion that they sat down and discussed the problem of her working, only their acceptance of the fact that his male ego would not allow him to accept money from her. Anderson's men often have the quality of petulant boys who want everything their own way; and the women just as often encourage this very quality. Both husband and wife are so completely locked into narrow, traditional sex roles that they are unable to respond to the true needs in themselves or in the other person.

The interdependence of the male-female relationship provides motivation for the actions throughout the play. Barbara's need for David demands that each time he attempts to leave, she must counter with an act which prevents his leaving. David is so dependent on Barbara for his sense of life that he cannot leave, though he tries. One might argue that the only hope for either character is to break free from this smothering dependency, but in the context of the play
such a move is impossible for separation from each other is death as long as they see life as something that is provided by another person.

David suggests the act of tearing away must be complete. When Barbara tells him that he might go only for a little while he answers:

David: No. It can't be that way. I don't know why, but it needs . . . an act of tearing . . . a cruel act, an act of commitment. . . . Something clear and irrevocable. It cannot be with permission, with sanction . . . on a let's see basis. (39)

David knows that the break must be total in order for him to be an independent individual; but as David attempts to make that break, Barbara holds tighter. She uses her fear to persuade him to stay:

Barbara: My father left my mother . . . and overnight her hair turned white. (David looks at her, stricken.) I didn't mean to say that. But I'm afraid. (40)

When David does finally leave, Barbara turns to Ted Sears, the devoted husband. He serves as a sounding-board for her emotions. It is in her scenes with Ted that we begin to have some insight into her character.

Barbara blames herself for what has happened to David. "I have done a terrible thing to him." (43) she tells Ted. "He came back a kid and a hero, and I turned him into a middle-aged man and a bum." (44) Barbara is in fact the reason for David's failure since she represents the responsibilities and demands that have prevented his writing. She has supported the dream and thus is as guilty of avoiding reality as he is. She may face the realities of day-to-day living, but she does not face the reality of her relationship with her husband. It is
essential that he need her and as long as he fails to write the second novel then his need is guaranteed and she is secure. Now the question that is never answered in the play becomes of paramount importance. Does David fail to write because he has no talent or is it because he has no opportunity? Julius Novick in _Beyond Broadway_ says of the play:

Anderson's hero is a writer, the author of a good novel in his youth, who has been struggling ever since to write his second novel. Five minutes after the play begins we know he never will, and all we can do for the rest of the evening is wait for the characters to realize it.7

What Mr. Novick does not say is why David won't write the second novel. Throughout this play there is a double line of reasoning. On the surface we are to believe David a romantic dreamer who destroys everyone around him; that Barbara is a long-suffering, loving wife who has been brutalized by her husband's dream. But beneath this surface is a very different theme. David, the creative artist, is destroyed by the demands of life which are personified by Barbara, the Circe who lures him onto the rocks of self-destruction. Anderson balances between these two ideas, and the unanswered question of why David has not written his book is the key to this dual theme.

There is no doubt that Barbara's course of action throughout the play is to prevent David's leaving. Without him she is completely unable to cope with life. She rejects the comfort of her mother and Ted Sears. They offer no permanent security. Since her identity is tied to David, she must hold him at all costs. When he refuses to stay,

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she lashes out at him in a speech that is filled with the images of death and killing:

Barbara: All right go! Go ahead! You're gone. Go to your God damned freedom. (David looks at her sudden anger.) But I won't come to see if you've killed yourself ... because I'll know ... without coming, I'll know that you have killed yourself. (David as he looks at her, he frowns.) Because you will ... when you have nothing but time and freedom and nobody to blame ... (She almost crouches as she goes on.) What are you going to write about? What? Tell me. You don't know anything about life. You hate life ... this life, this ugly but only life. ... And you cannot write from hate, only from love, and you ... you are incapable of love or loving. You can only hate and rape! ... Yes, it has been rape, but I wanted to be warm and open and ready. ... Do you know, do you have the faintest idea what it does to a woman not to want her husband? ... But you ... crucified us all on this dream of yours! (She becomes almost hysterical.) You're sick ... and I'm sorry as hell for you ... but I hate you and I won't take the blame any more ... and I don't give a good God damn what happens to you. (She starts to cry. David looks at her for a long moment of anger, the nakedness of her emotion, of her hatred, the awful beam it throws back down the years of their life together. The whole thing is intolerable, and he moves quickly to the door. Just as he gets to the door: Barbara, in the midst of her sobs, throws one last taunt at him.) I killed a child for you. (David stops, looks.) Yes ... I killed a child for you ... For your dream ... a child in my body ... I did ... For you ... (coming to him and spitting it at him, enraged by his look of incredulity.) Yes, for you. You killed the child. Your hatred. Your dream. (David moves toward her threateningly) For you. I loved you ... I loved you ... and it was for you, so that you could be free! (She is hysterical now.) (56-57)

Once again there is a duality in this outburst. One feels that there should be great sympathy for Barbara at this point, but another note keeps asserting itself. As Barbara talks one can almost feel David slipping down into the very mediocrity he fears most. Barbara has lashed out at David for something that is as much her doing as his.
By depending solely on David for her identity she places an unbearable burden on him. When David attempts to break free of this burden she blames him for the death of the child whom she has in fact killed. David is not the only person who crucifies people for his dream. Barbara crucifies David in this speech just as Laura does Bill when she accuses him of homosexuality.

The great tragedy of the play is that David does not leave. It is his only hope for answering the question of his own value. It is the only hope for Barbara who believes herself unloveable and therefore unworthy of love. Realizing, finally, their terrible dependence, they hate the person on whom they must depend.

David's response to Barbara's speech is another killing action; he strikes her. Then, in a gesture that illustrates his fall from the "soaring" heights to the "cruddy" depths he so fears, he:

... sinks to the floor, trying to shrink himself in on himself. He is there for some moments, his face contorted, trying to realize yet trying to blot it out at the same time, panting, gasping. Finally his head goes all the way to the floor as he cries. (57)

David does not leave because he, like all of Anderson's men, cannot survive without the woman's love and compassion. The woman is the person with the real power. In this play she is the terrible mother who destroys rather than lose her hold on the man. Barbara has literally brought David down. Her actions rob him of his manhood and return him to the state of the child; crying, struggling for some comfort, dependent on the mother, ready to be reborn.
Barbara introduces this very imagery into the language of the play.

She too seeks the comfort of the great earth mother:

Barbara: Somehow I just want to curl up, insensible in my mother's lap . . . Not my mother's lap of course . . . but just Mother . . . some impossibly compassionate Mother. (58)

Barbara becomes this impossibly compassionate Mother for David.

He serves his penance and moves through his purgatory by destroying his manuscript. It is the sacrifice he must make in order to receive the blessing of life from Barbara. It is his act of killing that equals her act of killing the child. And once the sacrifice has been made, she willingly bestows life once more.

The final scene, however, has the same duality that we have seen in other parts of the play. David never completely relinquishes his dream. His final speech undermines all else that has gone before.

David: I've known I'm no writer. I've known it for years. But I needed to be a success. I have to be somebody or I am nobody . . . and this was the only way.

Barb: (Still flat) You were a writer.

David: I'd write two sentences . . . and then terrified that the rest wouldn't turn out to be the masterpiece I wanted . . . I needed . . . I'd lie on the cot up there . . . and imagine the rest, all written, finished perfectly . . . and our life different . . . (he goes on with difficulty, but with determination to say it all.) I have all the airs . . . the divine discontent . . . the longing for freedom! I have been terrified of this summer . . . I somehow knew that I would come to the final truth . . . the final disaster . . . and I always thought that if I ever accepted this truth . . . that I would never be anything . . . I thought I would kill myself. Because I find this life intolerable without that dream . . . I still do. That is not changed. . . . And when the papers were all destroyed, I lay down to die . . . in self-contempt and despair. . . . But I couldn't die. (62)
David still holds the dream, he must hold on to it. What he knows, and what so many others before him and since have known, is that a person must have that dream in order to live a meaningful life. Otherwise what are we to assume happens after the play closes? Does David never write again now that he has said he is no writer? I think not. In fact, little has changed for all the hostility and recriminations. The most significant difference is that David must now start all over again; which is what Barbara wanted. But he will begin again, and will continue to struggle until he gets too close to success and Barbara must once again reduce him to the level of the child. Contrary to what the playwright has suggested, this is not the study of a sensitive, loving woman driven to despair by her romantic, insensitive husband. Rather the play is the destruction of a man's dream by the suffocating relationship in which he is caught. One can only wonder why any man or woman would want to endure fifteen years of such complete dependence. The play is perhaps strongest as a statement against such total dependency that one must destroy another in order to maintain a sense of self.

One further aspect of Barbara's character requires analysis. In nearly all of Anderson's plays there is some suggestion of the Oedipal conflict. It is of major importance in Tea and Sympathy and I Never Sang For My Father, but is evident in others. In the Oedipal conflict, as we find it in Anderson's works, the role of the woman is as a buffer between father and son. She must try to mediate between two male characters who constantly antagonize one another. The woman must often
choose between the two since there is no instance when father and son are reconciled. The men in Anderson's plays do not want to share the woman with any other person, even the other male in the family circle.

In *The Days Between*, there are two father-son relationships and Barbara is the woman who acts as the buffer in both cases. The first relationship is the obvious one; David is the father and Roger his son. But there is a second relationship between David and Ted that is also a father-son struggle. David is the willful, immature writer who is the symbolic son to Ted's mature, successful representation of the father. The sexual struggle between the two for Barbara's favor is basically Oedipal.

In the actual father-son relationship, Roger hates his father with an intensity that is difficult to believe in a child of his age or in one who has as little justification as is indicated in the play. David may neglect his son to some extent, but he is certainly not the monster Roger would have his mother believe him to be. Roger simply does not want to share his mother with David and he takes every opportunity to cause dissension between them. He is petulant and a sneak; spying on his father and tattling to Barbara about the lack of progress his father is making.

Barbara is caught in the middle. She needs David and thus cannot side with Roger who obviously needs her love and attention. Both parents tend to ignore the needs of their son because they are so caught-up in their own problems. Roger is constantly shunted aside
and placed in the care of Mrs. Walker. While Roger seems to resent such treatment from his father, his reaction toward Barbara is simply to be more demanding.

This is the only play in which the central male character is involved in two Oedipal struggles. David is literally beset on every side. This simply increases his need for Barbara. She must choose him over both Ted and Roger in order for David to become the dominant male.

Two other women are of importance in this play; Mrs. Walker, Barbara's mother, and Meg, Ted's dead wife. Mrs. Walker functions throughout the play as a reminder of the terrible condition of a woman alone without a man. She has little other purpose. While her image is maternal, she is too harsh to project the earth-mother character. Nor is she the destructive terrible mother even though she is somewhat negative in her clashes with Barbara. Mrs. Walker is the image of woman at her most impotent; not able to offer comfort and compassion and yet without the power to threaten or demand. She is a symbol of death because she lacks any means of influencing her state of being. She is powerless and this death-like situation is the result of not having a man at the center of her life. All indications are that her life was normal until her husband left her and then she had nothing.

Meg never appears on stage, but like Jennifer in Silent Night, Lonely Night, she plays an important role. She is the madonna figure, the perfect woman remembered and worshiped. Death removes her from the level of sexual involvement to a higher plane. Meg's power, like
Jennifer's, comes from the fact that she is removed from everyday events. She no longer has the power of life and death through sex and therefore can be worshipped and adored without fear. But her absence makes it essential that the man find a surrogate to fill the sexual role.

While Meg and Jennifer are not feared, they do cause feelings of guilt in the man. John feels responsible for Jennifer's insanity. Ted tells Barbara that he also feels guilt and must seek other women to relieve these feelings.

Ted: . . . Any place, any compassionate woman to get me through the night, to help wipe out the image of Meg staring up lifelessly at me from the hospital bed, her lips drawn back hideously. I looked on her with love, and she stared back at me with hate eternally frozen on her face. (59)

He has come to Barbara to seek her help in escaping the burden of Meg's memory. "I wanted you to help me move on . . . I wanted you to help kill Meg." (60) The relationship between Ted and Meg is filled with death, killing and hatred just as is the relationship between David and Barbara. Ted and Meg have had a similar confrontation:

Ted: Eight, nine years ago, Meg and I stood at opposite ends of a room and screamed at each other . . . yelled at each other our misery, our disillusion . . . cried like children for our lost world. . . . But for us . . . there was no meddling visitor out over the barn . . . and in time, thank God, we managed to . . . to crawl to each other. What you saw was not our marriage but a kind of re-marriage out of the ashes of our illusions. . . . "I take you for what you are. I will cherish you for what you are, your complexity . . . excluding nothing this time, ugliness, meanness, hate."

. . . We could even say, when she knew she was going to die . . . she could even say, "I hate you because you are going on living." . . . and I could say, "I hate you because you are dying and leaving me alone." (60)
The description of Ted and Meg's marriage is incomplete and thus we cannot draw clear conclusions, but certain ideas are implicit in Ted's lines. The dependency of the relationship continued unchanged, perhaps even more pronounced since it excluded nothing the second time. The hatred that the two can now acknowledge results from the inevitability of their losing their other self. Meg is dying and thus Ted faces separation from the essential anima image he has projected onto her. There is no indication that this remarriage was any less suffocating than the previous one since Meg dies with a look of hate frozen on her face.

The dominant image of women in *The Days Between* is as agents of death. They destroy in order to recreate. Barbara reduces David to the level of a child, while Meg dies leaving Ted unprotected and searching for comfort and compassion with surrogate wives. The women do not pass beyond the image of the terrible mother, and the men must submit to them, as David does, or wander constantly in search of some substitute for the woman who has deserted him through death.

The ritual in *The Days Between* is that of death with purgation and rebirth implied at the end. David must die to his old self and become a child so that Barbara can fulfill her role as the earth mother. The action of the play is David's gradual descent into the death-like state of the impotent child. The completion of the ritual is implied by Barbara's gesture of compassion at the end of the play. She can now become the agent of rebirth for David secure in the knowledge that his dependency guarantees her sense of self.
In the progression of the plays we have seen a gradually increasing tension in the woman's situation. The ideal woman has become the reluctant woman who has in turn become the woman trapped by her complete dependence on the man. As the woman becomes more restricted and dependent, the tension increases until, in the next play, the image shatters.
WOMAN FRAGMENTED

In *Tea and Sympathy* we saw the ritual of death, purgation, and redemption in its ideal form as defined by Anderson's men. In *Silent Night, Lonely Night* the ritual is complete but the reluctance of the woman makes it less than satisfying for the man. In *The Days Between* the emphasis is on the man's death and his rebirth is only implied at the end. In *I Never Sang For My Father* the ritual fails. Gene looks for some means of purgation and redemption from the guilt he feels because of his relationship with his father, but there is no woman to act as agent for his rebirth. The woman has become fragmented into separate facets of the ritual role. No single woman assumes the burden for Gene's life or responsibility for his rebirth.

Because there is no central female character to act as a buffer between father and son, they confront each other more directly than in any other play. But the open conflict is too threatening and throughout the play both father and son try to interject the image of some woman between them.

*I Never Sang For My Father* has been published both as a stage play and a film script. It was written originally for the screen in 1962,

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but failed to find a producer and was rewritten for the stage in 1965. After a successful run, it was once again adapted for the screen and was released as a motion picture in 1970.

*Never Sang For My Father* deals with a man's attempt to reconcile himself to his feeling, or lack of feeling, for his father. Gene Garrison has always been close to his mother who shares his love for the arts. When she dies, Gene is confronted with the problem of how to deal with an aging father. More importantly, however, Gene must deal with the fact that he has never loved his father, something that creates in him both sadness and a sense of guilt.

In order to deal with these conflicting emotions, Gene turns to several women: Alice, his sister who is bitter and practical to the point of cruelty; and Peggy, the soul-mate, who provides the compassion and understanding Gene once found with his mother. In the screen version, Gene also turns to Norma, a woman who provides temporary sexual comfort.

Much of the action of the play centers around Gene's parents, in particular, his father. Tom Garrison is an indomitable spirit, even at seventy-nine. With tenacity he has risen from a childhood of poverty and hardship to become a successful businessman. He is described as:

... a "fine figure of a man." He holds himself erect and has the bearing and manner of a retired brigadier general. There is a fierceness about the man. His voice is often something of a hard bark, tinged with irritation. He lives a good deal of his life on the edge of exasperation that things should be the way they are. Still, he is a remarkable man, outwardly gracious and
attentive, "courtly," with a twinkle in his eye. He always moves "firmly" with a destination. He does not believe it is right to amble of stroll. He is rarely what you would call relaxed. He usually insists on being the center and driving force of any endeavor or gathering. (F25)

Gene has never been close to his father. He has turned instead to his mother, Margaret Garrison, who is described as:

... still a pretty woman. She has great spirit, and a smile that lights up her whole face. She is a good sport about her problems. ... When she is put out, she says "darn" and not "damn." ... She is devoted to her son, but she is not the possessive and smothering mother. (S7)

Despite the difference in their ages, Margaret is very similar to Laura in *Tea and Sympathy*. Both have spirit but are lady-like in their language and actions. Both share a love of music, poetry and dramatics with the son. As we will see, both have an unsatisfactory relationship with their husbands and turn to the son for solace.

Despite the fact that the description says Margaret is not possessive or smothering, we will have reason to question this statement as we look at the ritual structure of the play. Margaret, like Laura, has great power over the son and his actions.

The most significant aspect of this play is the fragmentation of the image of the woman. In earlier works, we have seen this image complete in a single character. Laura combines the compassionate earth mother and the sexual soul-mate for Tom. She also projects the image of the terrible mother in her destruction of Bill. Katherine is primarily the sexual soul-mate but also carries the image of the earth mother in her capacity to offer protection and comfort. While Barbara, in *The Days Between*, suggests primarily the terrible mother,
she has been the soul-mate in their younger days and becomes the earth mother once David has been reduced to the level of a child at the end of the play. Each woman combines several images in her character.

In this play, however, each facet of the woman's image is found in a separate character: Margaret Garrison is the loving earth mother; Alice Garrison is the terrible mother; Norma, the surrogate wife and sexual partner; and Peggy is the soul-mate. This fragmentation of the woman's role is one reason that the ritual remains incomplete and unsatisfying for Gene. No one woman assumes responsibility for the action.

The structure of the events in the play is less obvious than that of previous works. There is no formal progression in time such as the descent into night and dawning of a new day that is found in Silent Night, Lonely Night and The Days Between. The use of space to reveal character and relationships is also gone. On the surface, the play is less obviously controlled than the earlier works.

There are similarities, however. The basic pattern in this play is Oedipal and it is most closely linked with Tea and Sympathy. While the confrontation between father and son is more central to this play, the action still relies on the women. Like Tom in Tea and Sympathy, Gene is unable to challenge his father or to take any steps to change circumstances. It is the women who make decisions and cause the forward movement of the play. Gilbert Cates, who directed both the stage and film versions, has commented on the central conflict:

Robert Anderson once told me of the struggle between grizzly bears—the young bear must fight for his herd, and in so doing, may send the older bear bleeding over a cliff. That battle
for primacy of the soul, for the right to live life one's own way, is the theme of *I Never Sang For My Father*. (F18-19)

The struggle may be central to the play; but the old bear is sent bleeding over a cliff, not by the son, but by the terrible mother. Just as in *Tea and Sympathy*, the son does nothing to further the act of destruction. Gene is unable to do more than agonize over his lack of feeling. He must rely on the women around him to deal with reality. As Walter Kerr points out in his review of the Broadway production:

... the evening was inevitably a sustained standstill. Mr. Holbrook (Gene) did not wish to do anything. He only wished to feel something.  

It is also important to note that Cates', or Anderson's, analogy indicates that the determination of primacy depends on the ownership of the females in the herd. The theme is not just primacy of the soul, but also primacy of sexual dominance as determined by the women. In nature, the female has little to do with the outcome of the struggle; in Anderson's plays, she has everything to do with it. It is she who makes the determination; and, because the women in this play fail to do so clearly, Gene is left dissatisfied and unhappy.

The structure of the play consists of Gene's turning to various women around him to help him deal with a situation he cannot face alone. Ultimately each woman disappoints him and leaves him vulnerable to the relationship with his father. The confrontation between Gene and Tom would appear, at first glance, to be Gene's coming face to face with

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his father and himself. As we will see, however, the confrontation is turned aside by the interjecting, at each crucial moment, of the female image. In his analysis of this play, Blau has pointed out the critical factor in the relationship between Gene and his father is their inability to relate directly to each other. They must have a woman between them as a buffer. Much of the movement in this play is based on this use of one woman or another as a barrier between the two men. Both Gene and Tom engage in this action. In the early part of the play, and for many years before the play opens, Margaret has provided such a buffer. After her death, Gene turns to Norma in the film, and to Alice in both versions. When Alice leaves, he turns to Peggy. Tom must also interject the woman's image between them. Immediately after Margaret's death he tells Gene about a woman he loved when he was a young man. Later, when they are choosing a casket, he evokes the memory of his mother as a barrier between them.

In several other plays, the woman is placed between the two men who are in conflict: Laura is between Bill and Tom in Tea and Sympathy, Barbara is between David and Ted in The Days Between, and in Silent Night, Lonely Night, Katherine is caught between the moral values of John and her father. While the father does not appear in this last play, there is a definite sense of conflict between two men who, like the others, confront each other only indirectly through the woman.

The imagery in the play is less obvious than in earlier works. Flowers are associated with Margaret both as symbols of love and as

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See page 15.
symbols of death. When the play opens, Margaret is wearing a white orchid. It is an Easter gift to her from Gene and it represents her perfection in his eyes and his devotion to her. Her line; "Some of the other ladies had orchids for Easter, but mine was the only white one." (S8) indicates the importance of the color and the occasion as symbols of death. White connotes both purity and, because of its association with funerals, impending death.

The ritual of eating is suggested in the scene in which Gene and his parents eat dinner at a restaurant, but the scene is filled with tension and there is little comfort in the act. Throughout this play, rituals fail to reach completion and therefore bring little or no satisfaction to those involved.

The image of women in this play is revealed primarily through the dramatic alignment of characters. As we have seen, the structure of the play consists of Gene's turning to the various women for comfort. As he does so, the dramatic alignment shifts. It is in this movement that we see the role of the woman.

In earlier works the woman is usually aligned on the side of the central male character. In Tea and Sympathy, Laura gradually moves into alignment with Tom against Bill, Herb Lee and the other boys at the school. In Silent Night, Lonely Night, Katherine is persuaded to John's side in opposition to the moral values represented by Katherine's father. In The Days Between, David and Barbara are brought into alignment through the destruction of David's manuscript, a symbolic reduction of David to impotence and the child-like state. In
each case, the woman represents the source of life and by becoming aligned with her, the man is given new life.

The dramatic alignment in *I Never Sang For My Father* is similar, but the fragmentation of the female image creates a complexity in this play that is not found in the others. In the opening scene we learn that, while Margaret is devoted to Gene, she refuses to malign Tom or to attack him in any overt way. She is always the loyal wife. Ideas that are expressed in Gene's monologues in the stage version are expressed directly by Margaret in the film.

Marg: You can't change him, lovey . . . There's no use trying . . . But he's a remarkable man . . . Look how he walks . . . like a brigadier general . . . he may not always remember where he's going, but he always goes there with a firm step. (F31)

Both the stage and film versions emphasize Margaret's surface loyalty to Tom. Although there is a very special love between Gene and herself, Margaret does not openly choose the son and reject the father as Laura does. She constantly defends Tom to Gene. However, beneath this apparent neutrality there is the obvious preference for Gene; and both father and son are aware of her choice. Tom, while resenting it, is not above using it to his advantage.

Tom: But listen, Gene . . . (he bites his upper lip . . . and his voice is heavy with emotion.) If you were to go out there, I mean, to live . . . it would kill your mother. (He looks at his son with piercing eyes . . . tears starting . . . This has been in the nature of a plea and an order. Gene says nothing. . . . He is angry at this order . . . that his father would say such a thing.) God, you know y' re her whole life. (Gene is further embarrassed and troubled by this statement of what he knows to be the truth . . . from his father.) Yes, you are! Oh, she likes your sister. But you . . . are . . . her . . . life! (213)
As if to underscore the validity of Tom's remark, Margaret appears and says:

Marg: Oh, Gene, I've just been looking at your garden. . . .
Give me a real hug . . . you haven't given me a real hug, yet. (Gene hugs her . . . uncomfortable . . . but loving and dutiful . . . it is, after all, a small thing. Margaret looks at him . . . then kisses him on the lips . . . ) Mmmmmmm (She smiles, making a playful thing of it . . .)
Oh, you're a sight for sore eyes. (Tom has watched this, and looks significantly at Gene . . .) (S13)

There is in this passage, a suggestion of the sexual nature of the mother-son relationship. Margaret is generally flirtatious in her relationship to Gene, kissing him on the lips, reminding him of their past happy times listening to opera in her bedroom or dancing together at parties when Tom was off talking to his cronies. She asks Gene to buy her perfume for her birthday but leaves the choice of the scent up to him. Such actions suggest the romantic nature of their relationship and link them to Tom and Laura in Tea and Sympathy.

Margaret is also similar to Laura in that her marriage is unsatisfactory. Tom is insensitive to her needs.

Marg: Oh, Tom! . . . I can't have anyone in. Your Father won't play bridge or do anything. He just wants to watch Westerns or tell the story of his life.

Tom: Now wait a minute.

Marg: I can't invite people to come over to watch Westerns or to listen to you go on and on. You embarrass me so. You insist on going into the most gruesome details of your life.

Tom: People seem to be interested.

Marg: I admit it's a remarkable story, your life. But there are other things to talk about. People want to talk about art or music or books. (S16-17)
Gene sees the unhappy relationship between his parents as his father's fault. He tells Alice:

Gene: Dad says, he boasts, he never knew the meaning of the word "quit." Well, he quit on her all right. And I . . . I was just there. (S43)

But there is evidence that Margaret also "quit" on Tom. Blau points out that:

Significantly, just after his wife's death, father flirts with a nurse, perhaps symbolizing the real lack of warmth between them . . . 5

This suggests an important element in their relationship. There is reason to believe Margaret has not provided the sexual companionship Tom has wanted and needed. Not only does he flirt with the nurse after Margaret's death, but he also banter with the waitress earlier in the restaurant. Margaret's response to this teasing of the waitress is: "If you want to make a fool of yourself, go right ahead." (S19) She makes Tom feel foolish for his need to evoke a sexual response by flirting. Margaret also implies an unsatisfactory sex life in her conversation with Gene.

Marg: I'll never understand your generation, I guess. I'm glad I didn't have to face all . . . well, all that, in my day. People simply waited. And I'm not so sure we weren't right.

Gene: (Not wanting to go into it.) Well . . .

Marg: Too late for me to worry about that now. Though sometimes I wish I'd known more . . . understood more . . . (Stops embarrassed. Gene is sad and uncomfortable that his 78-year-old Mother would seem to want to talk to someone at last about her unsatisfactory sex life . . . (S21)

5Ibid., p. 67.
A similar situation appears in Double Solitaire with a character very closely linked to Margaret. Mrs. Potter is a woman in her seventies, caught in an unhappy marriage very much like Margaret's. She has simply refused to continue sexual activity once she reached menopause. Several other women also reject sex once they reach middle-age so that it is possible the same thing has happened between Margaret and Tom. There is no indication of physical contact between them. Because sexual relations are essential to Anderson's men, this absence of sexual contact may be one reason for Tom's belligerent attitude. As Blau points out: "In old age, the "tiger" roars in order to reassure himself that he is not weak and vulnerable." Because Tom cannot reassure himself sexually, he must do so verbally. By withholding sexual comfort, Margaret has, in a sense, also "quit" on Tom.

On the surface, Margaret would appear to be the loving, undemanding mother who relieves her son of any sense of responsibility for her.

Marg: You've been so good to me, Gene, so considerate. Perhaps I've let you be too considerate. But it was your nature, and your Father just withdrew behind his paper and his investments and his golf. And our interests seem to go together. You liked to sing, and I played the piano, oh, miserably, but I played. (She strokes his hand.) I tried not to be one of those possessive mothers, Gene. If I did things wrong, I just did the best I knew how. (S22)

We begin to see in these lines the shadow side of Margaret just as we saw a shadow side to the seemingly perfect Laura. Margaret has turned to Gene in her unhappiness and made him responsible for her life. There is insufficient information for a complete analysis of her motivation, but it is possible that she sought in Gene an intimate love...
relationship devoid of sexual elements. Perhaps Tom withdrew behind his paper and his investments and his golf because Margaret was not responsive to his physical needs. Tom and Margaret are caught in the same interdependent relationship we have seen in other male-female relationships. Cause and effect become intermingled until it is impossible to place blame for the unhappiness that results. Both have been guilty of withdrawal. Margaret's removal from sexual contact gives her the qualities of the madonna, offering love, compassion, and comfort without sex to the son who worships her. The madonna figure causes guilt, however, because the one who worships her must assume responsibility for her death. Gene must assume some burden of responsibility for Margaret's death since Tom has just warned him that his marriage and move to California will kill Margaret. In spite of the fact that the prediction has come true, very little is made of it. Tom mentions it only once in the final confrontation scene when he tells Gene: "... I warned you." (S60) Gene, however, indicates that he blames Tom for his mother's death.

Gene: She was terribly worried about my Father's health. Yesterday she said to me, "You know what put me here."

Dr: Well Gene, I think that's a little too harsh. She's been living on borrowed time for quite a while, you know. (S35)

The conflict between father and son becomes more open as they alternately accuse each other of Margaret's death. As in similar situations in other plays, the mother aligns herself with the son. Margaret has also suggested that worry over Tom has caused her illness.
The ritual requires that the mother be unselfish and giving, but often this apparent unselfishness hides a very real determination to hold on to the child-man. We have seen this most clearly in The Days Between. It is also apparent in Margaret's relationship to Gene. As Walter Kerr points out:

She would have had him leave them both before they became "burdens." But her very generosity was an unwitting trap. She could not realize that her unwillingness to become a burden became the greatest burden of all.8

Margaret as the madonna figure provides compassion and tenderness, but she also leaves Gene's situation unresolved. Because she refuses to complete the Oedipal ritual of denying the father and choosing the son through an act of sexual rebirth, Gene is left unsatisfied. He is also unprotected and now faces his father without an intervening woman. Alice arrives in time to fill the space between them before they come to a confrontation.

It is Alice who brings about the defeat of the father. She is described as "attractive, brisk, realistic, unsentimental." (S41) There is little in her that is compassionate or gentle. She carries forward the image of woman that was first suggested in the character of Janet in Silent Night, Lonely Night, one who represents the realities of life.

Alice has been banished from the home by Tom for having married a Jew against her father's wishes. This event provides the superficial motivation for her actions in the play, but within the ritual structure,
her actions are motivated by her role as the terrible mother who destroys the father in order to release the son.

Alice is one of the many women in Anderson's plays who confronts the realities of life with a cold practicality. She tells Gene:

Alice: The difference between us is that I accept the inevitable sadness of this world without an acute sense of personal guilt. You don't. (S52)

She accepts the situation, seemingly, without any feeling.

Alice: I know I sound hard, but he's had his life... and as long as we can be assured that he's taken care of... Oh. I'll feel some guilt, and you, maybe more. But my responsibility is to my husband and my children. (S46)

Gene is exactly the opposite. He is typical of Anderson's men in that he cannot accept the inevitable unhappiness of life.

Gene: God, it's all so ugly.

Alice: (Smiling) Yes, my gentle Gene... a lot of life is.

Gene: Now, look, don't go trying to make me out some soft-hearted... (He can't find the word.) I know life is ugly.

Alice: Yes, I think you know it. You've lived through a great deal of ugliness. But you work like a Trojan to deny it, to make it not so. (S46-47)

For Alice, the situation is cut and dried. She and Gene must decide what to do with Tom now that Margaret is dead. She tells Gene: "We have a practical problem here," and she sets out to settle the situation with little regard for Tom's feelings. It is she who attacks Tom's independence and his sense of manhood. While Gene abhors the situation and agonizes over it, he does nothing to stop her. Alice suggests a full-time housekeeper, undercutting Tom's
self-sufficiency. She points out that he has difficulty maintaining his balance and thus attacks his physical abilities. No matter how justified in terms of the practicality of the situation, her actions are cruel and inhuman in that they diminish Tom's sense of his own value. It is an act of slow castration carried out before our very eyes.

Gene can identify with the horror of what is happening to his father. He tells Alice: "... he's my Father, and a man. And what's happening to him appalls me as a man." (S47) It must also appall everyone in the audience. But what is equally as appalling is Gene's inability or unwillingness to stop the process. While Gene is horrified at the destruction of his father, he knows that it is an essential act if he is to be free. Since he hasn't the strength to confront his father himself, he is willing to allow Alice to do it for him. It is only after Alice has reduced Tom to a beaten old man that Gene can face him in the final scene.

The imagery in Alice's lines clearly suggests the sexual nature of the conflict. As long as Tom is dominant, Gene is symbolically impotent.

Alice: Didn't you see yourself there . . . when he started to rage. Didn't you feel yourself pull in? . . .
. . . Don't you understand he's got to hate you? He may not think it in his head or feel it in his heart, but you are his enemy! From the moment you were born a boy you were a threat to this man and his enemy.
Gene: That sounds like the textbooks, Alice.

Alice: He wants your balls . . . and he's had them! (S52-53)

In the final confrontation there is no resolution to this conflict because, in spite of Alice, Tom will not be defeated completely. She has undermined his sense of virility and left him impotent, but stubbornly he still rages. Tom knows he is under attack and indicates his sense of impotency in the final scene when he tells Gene:

Tom: You know I never had hair on my chest. . . . I don't understand it. . . . You have hair on your chest. . . . I just didn't have any. . . . Well, I'm confident if I could get some exercise. . . . (S55)

Tom is expressing the sense of his lost virility, but still there is the suggestion in the tone of his lines that he is not yet through. His reference to a small revolver has the same sexual significance.

Tom: Never had occasion to use it. Oh, I took it out West one Winter when we went to Arizona instead of Florida . . . Shot at a rattlesnake in a rock pile. (Take pot shots.) I don't have a permit for this any more . . . (S56)

Tom is aware, at least subconsciously, of his weakening position as the dominant male but he continues to fight. One reason audience sympathy goes to Tom is this tenacity. He, like David in The Days Between, commands our respect and sympathy because he fights against overwhelming odds. Gene would have Tom willingly relinquish his position as dominant male, but Tom refuses to "go gentle into that good night."

Because we must respect the courage and tenacity of this old man in spite of his unreasonable demands, Alice's character takes on a very
negative image. In her slow but sure destruction of Tom's sense of
his independent and valuable self, she assumes monstrous qualities.
Her actions parallel those of Laura's in *Tea and Sympathy* when she
accuses Bill of homosexuality. She is also linked to Barbara in *The
Days Between* when she reduces David to the level of an impotent child.
Alice just as surely attacks Tom's manhood and in so doing, symboli-
cally castrates him. Thus Gene's final confrontation is with a man
who has already been defeated sexually even though he continues to
assert himself.

Margaret and Alice are the only two major female characters
who appear in the stage play. Carol, Gene's first wife is mentioned
but only in passing. We know nothing about her or their relationship
except that she died following a long illness. In the film, two
other major female characters appear. Anderson explains that, while
the two women appeared in the original film version, they were cut
from the stage play "because of the technical restrictions of the
theatre." (F13) He does not elaborate on exactly what the restrictions
were, or why they necessitated the cutting of the two characters.

The elimination of Norma, Gene's sex partner, and Peggy, his
future wife, has an interesting and significant effect on the action
in the play. It serves to isolate Gene and give the story a less
happy ending. In the film, Gene is able to turn to these women for
comfort, one providing sexual contact and the other an emotional bond.
Therefore, he seems more protected and less vulnerable than Tom who is
completely isolated and alone. In the stage play, Gene does not have
either woman with him although we know Peggy is waiting in California. Gene is as isolated as Tom at the end of the stage play and this gives it a more depressing conclusion. We feel more sympathy for the two men who are both cut off from the female contact they seek. In the film, our sympathy remains largely with Tom. Gene has the companionship he seeks in Peggy even though he continues to regret the unsatisfactory relationship with his father. At the end of the film, it is Tom who is left alone and isolated, and, in spite of the fact that much of the situation is his own fault, our sympathy goes to this lonely old man.

Norma is similar to Katherine in Silent Night, Lonely Night, and to Sylvia in Double Solitaire. All three women assume the role of surrogate wife for the men in their lives. They offer sexual companionship without demanding anything in return. Each relinquishes her identity in order to become whatever the man needs. This willingness to give up a sense of self is one quality that makes such women in Anderson's plays unbelievable. Rather than being fully drawn human beings with needs and requirements of their own, they become the image of woman that the man wishes them to be. They give without asking anything in return. They allow themselves to be used for sexual release and then absolve the man of any sense of guilt for having so used them.

Norma: What do you feel so guilty about now . . . that you're going to get married and you're here with me?

Gene: It always seems as though I'm just using you.
Norma: I don't think of it as "using." Back when Carol was dying, when you first came running up those steps, I was pretty damned touched by the whole thing.

Gene: (Smiles) You make it sound great. But somewhere you must hate me just coming to you like this. "Hello, are you going to be in? I want to come over." Still I do it when I get all . . . (he starts to tense.)

Norma: So other men go out on a binge. You come to me. Frankly I like your way better. It's friendlier. (F62)

This, like Laura's marriage to Bill in Tea and Sympathy, is a situation that cannot bear questioning or it falls apart. Norma accepts her role because the ritual requires that she accept it and we must not ask whether or not Gene is in fact using her. We must not ask how Norma must feel knowing Gene has chosen to marry another woman when she, Norma, has seen him through the death of his first wife and has provided him with sexual comfort during that time. We are given no hint as to her motivation or true feelings. She says lovely things in terms of what Gene needs to hear, but there is a falseness to them. The question is not why Gene doesn't choose to marry her instead of Peggy, but why he chooses to see Norma only as a means of relieving his tensions. And one must inevitably ask why any person would willingly allow herself to be placed on the level of a shot of whiskey or a cold shower. The film clearly shows Gene involved in several activities designed to relieve the tension caused by the confrontation with his father. He washes his face with cold water, he pours himself a drink, and he goes to see Norma. She is simply the third action, little different from the first two. Norma herself verbalizes this when she says some men go on binges but Gene comes to her instead.
Gene cares little or nothing for her as a unique individual. She is one more way of relieving tension. Anderson's men must have sexual comfort when isolated and alone and Norma provides such comfort. Once Peggy arrives, Norma is no longer needed and she disappears without a second thought on Gene's part.

If Norma truly does not care about Gene's plans to marry someone else, if she provides sexual gratification without any thought for her own needs and desires, then she is little better than the prostitute or whore. In fact, all such women do have elements of the whore. Katherine in Silent Night, Lonely Night expresses such fears and is paid money, no matter how little, by John. Sylvia in Double Solitaire has not one, but many men in her life, and there is a crudeness to her that suggests the whore image. The quality that separates the whore from the acceptable sexual partner is her lack of self-esteem. No woman who values her own uniqueness would willingly disavow her uniqueness in order to become whatever image the man needs. This concept is clearly indicated in the final play, Double Solitaire.

In I Never Sang For My Father, Anderson has used a visual image to give Norma the quality of the prostitute. She is brunette while Peggy, the pure wifely woman, is blonde. This archetypal pattern is found throughout the history of Western art, but has been used so frequently in film it has become a cliche. A classic example is in High Noon, a film that contrasts the pure, blonde Grace Kelly with the dark Katy Jurado who is the town Madam.

If Norma does in fact care for Gene, then she must feel some loss at his choosing another woman and Gene must accept responsibility for
causing her unhappiness. If she does not care for Gene, then what is her motivation for having sex with him? Does she care for him only temporarily, suggesting that she will offer such comfort to another man and then another? This is the pattern of the whore even though there is no monetary payment in this case. We are not talking about a series of meaningful relationships based on the woman's value as a unique individual, but a series of roles she must play for the particular men who come to her. Norma's motives cannot be both pure and impure and it is probably for this reason that Anderson avoids her motives entirely. We simply do not know why she does what she does. Anderson's men want to have it both ways; they want women who will give themselves sexually and assume the identity the man wishes to project on them, but do not want the women to make demands in return. This is a fantasy that the men seek and it falls apart when we begin to question it too closely. Once we begin to examine the ideal woman whether earth mother or sexual partner, we find the shadow side of the witch or whore.

Peggy is one of the very few career women in all of Anderson's plays. Laura has been an actress; but, by her own admission, she wasn't very good at it. The Madam, in Solitaire runs the Call Family but her image is that of the prostitute rather than an acceptable career woman. Sylvia has her own dress shop in Double Solitaire, but her social life takes precedence over it. Dorothy and Jill in You Know I Can't Hear You When The Waters' Running are typists but hardly what
one could call career women. Peggy is the only truly professional
woman and her work is totally unimportant to the context of the
play. At the first hint that Gene might have to stay near his father,
she willingly offers to give up her practice as a gynecologist, uproot
her family, and move East.

Gene: ... I went to look at (old age) homes, the other day.

Peggy: (Senses the deeper problem) We'd all come East, you know.
The kids . . . if you want it that way. (F125)

Peggy, like all the positive women characters in Anderson's works,
is willing to sacrifice herself and her identity for the man. It is
one of the primary attributes of the perfect woman. Her function in
the play is completely ritualistic just as is Norma's since neither
furthers the action of the play. Peggy has a total of only fourteen
lines most single sentences such as; "How do you do, Mr. Garrison?",
"Oh . . . a woman's doctor.", "Yes, I was sorry to hear about it."
(F126-127) Her sole function is to provide the compassion and comfort
necessary for Gene and to act as a barrier between him and his father.

Peggy is the soul-mate image of the anima with some maternal
qualities. She is the other half of Gene's psychic self in that she
makes him feel complete and whole In her maternal role she is the
obvious source of life because she suggests a rebirth into a newer and
happier life through marriage and sex. Because of her presence, Gene
is a much less tragic figure than Tom who remains alone and isolated.

While Norma and Peggy provide an essential part of the role of the
woman in the ritual; they, like Margaret and Alice do not complete the
ritual action for Gene. They do not clearly establish him as the dominant male. Norma gives him sexual reassurance and Peggy provides the completed self which is one function of the soul-mate, but the fragmentation of the woman's role leaves the ritual incomplete and unsatisfactory. There is no Laura to clearly establish the strength and dominance of the son and to give him a sense of life through sexual rebirth.

Many times in Anderson's plays important women are talked about but never actually seen on stage: Jennifer in Silent Night, Lonely Night, Ellie in Tea and Sympathy, Meg in The Days Between. In this play, Tom Garrison's mother is important to the image of women although she is not seen. She represents the idealized madonna who is worshipped and adored. She, like the other women who project this image, is removed from reality through death. Tom's relationship to his mother is very similar to Gene's relationship to Margaret. Tom remembers his mother as perfect, loving, and compassionate, and like so many of Anderson's men, he would rather worship the ideal from afar than deal with the real women in his life. Each time he is faced with Margaret's death, his mind wanders off into thoughts of his mother. When he and Gene go to pick Margaret's casket he sees a small one and says:

Tom: My Mother would have fit in that . . . She was a little bit of a thing . . . Died when I was ten. (Tears come to his eyes.) I don't remember much about her funeral except my Father . . . He'd run out on us, but he came back when she died . . . and I wouldn't let him come to the cemetery . . . (S40)

Tom has suffered through the same Oedipal pattern Gene now faces. Only Tom was an active participant in the struggle with his father.
He tells Gene:

Tom: I was only ten . . . we hadn't seen him in over a year, living, the four of us, in a miserable two-room tenement, and suddenly he shows up, weeping, and begging and drunk as usual. And I shoved him off. I never saw him again till some years later, when he was dying in Bellevue . . . of drink. (S18)

Tom has been the agent of action in the struggle against his father. The conflict has been direct, while Gene must rely on the women around him to complete the ritual struggle.

Gene eventually realizes that he is at least partially responsible for the breach between him and his father, but the struggle for Gene is not to close this gap, but rather to triumph over his father. If Gene were primarily concerned with being close to his father, he would take advantage of the moment when, in the final scene, the barriers are down. Instead, Gene withdraws and interjects still another woman between them.

Tom: ( . . . starts to cry . . . and the deep, deep sobs finally come and his emaciated body is wracked by them . . . it is a terrible, almost soundless sobbing . . . Gene comes to his father and puts his arms around him and holds him. . . . After a few moments . . . ) I didn't think it would be this way . . . I always thought I'd go first. (He sobs again . . . gasping for air . . . Gene continues to hold him . . . inevitably moved and touched by this genuine suffering . . . Finally . . . gets a stern grip on himself.) I'm sorry . . . (Tries to shake it off.) It just comes over me. . . . It'll pass. . . . I'll get a hold of myself.

Gene: Don't try, Dad. . . . Believe me, it's best . . .

Tom: (Angry with himself.) No. . . . It's just that. . . . I'll be all right. (He turns and blows his nose.)

Gene: It's rough, Dad. . . . It's bound to be rough.
Tom: (Shakes his head to snap out of it . . .) It'll pass . . . it'll pass . . . (Starts to wrap up the picture of his Mother.)

Gene: Can I help you put these things away, Dad?

Tom: No . . . No. . . . I can . . . (He seems to be looking for something he can't find . . .) Well, if you would. (Gene helps him wrap the pictures . . .) I don't know what we'd do without you . . . (And together they put the things back in the box . . .) As they put the things back in the box, Gene is deeply moved with feelings of tenderness for his Father. . . . (S58)

At this point, for the first time, there are no barriers between the two men. For the first time in their lives, they are communicating without a woman as interpreter between them. But Gene cannot continue the direct confrontation. Rather than enjoy this new closeness with Tom, he interjects the image of Peggy between them.

Gene: Dad?

Tom: Yes?

Gene: (Carefully.) You remember . . . I wrote you about California . . . and Peggy?

Tom: What?

Gene: The girl . . . in California.

Tom: (On guard) Oh, yes.

Gene: (Putting it carefully, and slowly.) I'm thinking very seriously, Dad . . . of going out there . . . to marry . . . and to live.

Anderson describes Gene's motivation as "the most loving gesture Gene has made to his Father in his life." Gene asks Tom to go to California with him and live in his home. But so often in Anderson's plays, the loving gesture hides a more selfish motivation. Just as Margaret's
attempt to release Gene from responsibility was a very binding act, so Gene's offer to Tom is a selfish gesture as well as a generous one. It is generous only from Gene's point of view. Tom is an old man who does not want to leave his home and roots in the East. To readjust at his age is a very traumatic experience, but Gene is completely unaware or insensitive to the feelings of this old man. He feels righteous in having made his gesture and therefore he can be indignant when Tom refuses. It does not occur to him that this is not the time to be suggesting new and drastic moves, but rather is a time when he could have spent a few weeks or months sharing the new closeness with Tom before uprooting him. But we are again bringing rational action to bear where the ritual is the dominant motivation. Gene must break free of Tom, not for Tom's sake, but for his own. He must be established as the dominant male and he can do so only by breaking free and leaving Tom isolated, alone, and defeated. He does so in such a way that Tom appears to reject Gene and so Gene manages to escape once again the responsibility for what happens. He can leave saying that he did all he could for an ungrateful old man who threw him out. Only the guilt goes with him.

Gene: Death ends a life . . . but it does not end a relationship, which struggles on in the survivor's mind . . . toward some resolution, which it never finds. (S62)

The women in this play serve two functions; they are a barrier between Gene and his father, and they are the agents for action within the Oedipal pattern. Because the image is fragmented, the ritual
remains incomplete and unsatisfactory. No one woman assumes the responsibility for Gene's happiness and he is unable to assume it for himself. This play marks the beginning of a new element in Anderson's work. In previous plays, the woman has always provided at least some relief for the man through the ritual of sexual contact. In *Tea and Sympathy*, Tom is reborn through Laura's actions. In *Silent Night*, *Lonely Night*, John is given at least temporary release from his unhappiness by Katherine's sexual sacrifice. In *The Days Between*, Barbara can restore life to the child-like David through a sexual rebirth that we assume takes place after the play is over. But in this play, the women perform their separate parts of the ritual role and yet the ritual as a whole fails. We will see this same failure of the ritual in the plays that follow.
Perhaps when life becomes too painful to bear our only recourse is to laugh. You Know I Can't Hear You When The Water's Running\textsuperscript{1} was written during the period when The Days Between was being produced across the country by the American Playwrights Theatre and Anderson had recently finished writing I Never Sang For My Father. It is as though the sombre ideas of these two plays had to errupt in laughter. The result is a new positive element and a softening of the themes seen in the preceeding works.

While these plays differ from the other works in this study because of their comic approach, there are similarities in the images of the women. The female characters in these lighthearted plays share many of the qualities of the women in the more serious works. There is an underlying ritual pattern, and the women are defined in terms of their role within this ritual.

The Shock of Recognition

The first play in the series deals with a playwright's attempts to justify the appearance of a nude male actor on stage. His producer cannot see the incident as anything other than impossible. In order to prove his point, the producer offers the part to an actor who happens to be in his office. Believing the man will refuse to appear

\end{footnote}

\textsuperscript{1}
naked on stage, he is amazed to discover the man not only willing, but eager for the part. Throughout the play, the producer, Herb, approaches the idea of sex as a dirty joke. In contrast, the playwright, Jack, is something of a prude. He insists that a naked man is pathetic and touching.

Jack: This is not a sexy, muscular man . . . bare to the waist and full of erotic implications as to what he's got in his bulging blue jeans. I want to show man as he is . . . you . . . me . . .

Herb: Speak for yourself . . .

Jack: . . . what Shakespeare called a poor forked radish . . . with no implications except of mortality and ridiculousness. (8-9)

The lines that follow suggest two themes we have seen in other plays; that man is aware of his mortality and death, and that he projects a need to the woman through his ridiculousness. Man is a poor, threatened being who turns to the woman for protection against the reality of his situation. These lines also define the woman's role as one of maternal protection.

Herb: (Reads) "He is touching in his nakedness . . . " Do you find a naked man "touching?"

Jack: Well . . . actually that was Sarah's expression. She finds a naked man . . . especially his rear end . . . "touching." When she said it, she called my attention to it, I took a look in the mirror.

Herb: And did you find your . . . tail . . . touching?

Jack: Look--

Herb: I think it's Sarah needs the analyst, not you. "Touching." Sounds kind of maternal, as though she wanted to use some baby powder on it. (9)
Later Herb tells the actor:

Herb: Mr. Barnstable has the interesting theory that most women look upon that part of their men as ridiculous and pathetic . . . and he wants to present his man not as a stud, not as a romanticized phallic symbol, but as the miserable, laughable thing it is. (21)

There is also the suggestion of the brutality of sex that we have seen in the relationship between Barbara and David in The Days Between and is suggested in Laura and Bill's relationship in Tea and Sympathy. In these two plays, the man uses his sex as a weapon against the woman so that their love becomes "rape."

Herb: . . . I don't think any man feels that his . . . thing . . . is ridiculous. I think he feels it's a formidable weapon, an awesome . . . thing.

Jack: Is that the way you think of it, something to attack with . . . aggressive . . . battering? (10)

In the light, very funny, bantering between Jack and Herb one is reluctant to look too deeply into the symbolism, but even in the laughter there is a subtle but sure sense of the woman's role. In spite of Jack's attempt to defend the modern woman, the only female character in the play looks anything but modern. Jack tells Herb that:

Jack: Women are bored with this respectability which red-blooded but prudish men have forced on them . . . They want to be let in on the joke. (14)

However, Dorothy, Herb's secretary disproves everything Jack would have us believe. She is a college student, "a Bennington girl doing her three months' stint of learning about real life." (12-13) But her image is that of a silly grade-schooler. Her entire range of emotions consists of blushing and giggling. When Herb asks her "Dorothy, do
you find a man's sexual equipment ridiculous and pathetic?" she "runs out gasping and in confusion." (14) This is hardly the action of a modern, educated woman. Her characterization is insipid and certainly does not reflect the attitude toward sex that Jack would have us believe. Instead she simply reinforces the stereotype of the silly, empty-headed female.

The Footsteps of Doves

In the second play, we see a more fully developed image of woman. Harriet, the wife, is practical, realistic, and unromantic. She is very similar to Janet in Silent Night, Lonely Night and Barbara in The Days Between. George, the husband, is a romantic very much like David in The Days Between and Charley in Double Solitaire.

Harriet has decided that they must trade their old double bed for twins, and they have come to the bedding department of a store to make a selection. In the course of their discussion of the matter several ideas appear that have been seen in the more serious plays. George sees the twin beds as a threat to his sex life and he introduces the idea of death as the result of the loss of sexual activity. He and Harriet lie down on one of the new beds to try it out and he tells her: "Put sides and a lid on it and bury us." (26)

George also suggests the theme of physical contact as the most desirable means of communicating. He is afraid of the loss of such contact because it suggests isolation and death.

George: Now people are detached. They dance far away from each other. They want to sleep far away from each other.
... Sure, if you want to stay apart, a fifty-four inch is too small. But that's not the idea. The idea is to get all mixed up with each other. You've seen cats sleeping together. (He proceeds to demonstrate: cuddling his arms around his chest. Harriet ignores him; she goes on reading labels and looking at ticking swatches, etc.) Or puppies or bears. One stirs, the other stirs... kind of slow and easy accommodation to each other. But they stay in a lump. For reassurance, comfort. All day you bump up against hard facts, hard edges, cold bodies. Good old fifty-four throws you up against something warm and round and soft... (26-27)

The important idea is physical contact as a means of protection and comfort against the harshness of life, and the role of the woman as the source of such comfort. We have seen this most clearly in John's attitude toward Katherine in Silent Night, Lonely Night.

The image of flowers is introduced briefly, but instead of suggesting the woman's perfection and the man's love for her as it has in earlier plays, it indicates instead Harriet's unfeeling attitude toward George. He has insisted on keeping the old double bed in the attic, but Harriet tells him there is no room for it.

George: I will make room. You saved your wedding corsage. I can save our bed.

Harriet: (Blazing but smiling) I will throw out my wedding corsage... gladly! (28)

The corsage represents the early passion that has now died for Harriet. She is willing, even eager, to do away with this element of their life. Like Margaret in I Never Sang For My Father and Mrs. Potter in Double Solitaire, she is satisfied to end the sexual relationship much sooner than the man. For her, as for most of Anderson's women, time dims the need for romance or sexual passion. When George reminds her
of their early romance she replies:

Harriet: George, that was all lovely. I'm not regretting any of that. Only times change. People change. (30)

Barbara suggests this same attitude in The Days Between when she refuses to remain the ideal David remembers. The same theme is seen more clearly in Double Solitaire where Barbara's words very nearly parallel Harriet's statement.

Barb: "Hey, Charley, it's me, Barbara. Age forty-two. Not your girl." You scared me because I knew I couldn't be your girl . . . your bride. All brides die, Charley . . .

Women in Anderson's plays inevitably move beyond the romantic emotions of early love, but the men continue to need such passion as proof of life and virility. While the women mature, the men remain emotionally adolescent.

Harriet suggests the reason for such changes in the woman when she tells George:

Harriet: . . . Old cuddly bears under a quilt . . . a couple of soup spoons nestled in a drawer . . . old night-night. A very romantic picture. Old ever-ready. . . . Sub-consciously I may be rebelling against that. I may want the space so that you'll have to make the effort, wade across the Persian Gulf. Get your feet wet. . . . Not just suddenly decide you might as well since you hardly have to move to get it. (31)

This idea is expanded and analyzed more completely in Double Solitaire but the basis for the woman's attitude is laid in this play. The woman begins to feel that she is being taken for granted, that she is sought out not because she is a unique individual, but only because

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she is an essential part of the ritual. As she senses that she is part of the ritual, she begins to feel the loss of identity that turns her into the whore image. As Katherine says in Silent Night, Lonely Night, "Any woman would do."

The truth of this idea that any woman would do is supported by the last half of The Footsteps of Doves. Harriet leaves to look at headboards and Jill enters. She is described as, "a swinging, charming, and disarming young woman of twenty-three." (32) She is the ideal woman; young, beautiful, understanding, and willing to play her part in the ritual without question. Because of the difference in her age and Harriet's, Jill is less immediately recognized as a surrogate wife than other similar characters, but she represents the memory George has of Harriet when she was young and sexually responsive. Jill is a surrogate for the young Harriet.

Jill is another example of the fantasy woman, similar to Norma in I Never Sang For My Father. She is willing to participate in sex without any apparent demands, even for recognition of her own uniqueness. She is quite frankly and openly shopping for a bed for her expected love affairs. This seems an attempt to make her modern and free, but we find out very quickly that her attitudes are not as modern and independent as they seemed at first. She sees as her primary function the playing of the ritualistic role for the man, and she begins by flattering George's ego while condemning her own sex.
Jill: I think men improve with age, mostly. They know what they want and how to get it, and what to do with it when they get it. Now, women... they get their man, feather their nests, and then let themselves go. That's cheating in my book. I'm not talking about your wife, of course.

Geo: Oh, Harriet's still--

Jill: (Going right on.) It was all right when we were an agrarian society and woman's function was to breed children to help on the farm. But now she has a responsibility to keep herself attractive. I wrote a paper on that in college. (34)

Jill is what some men see as the ideal "liberated" woman, sexually accommodating but tied to the idea of total dedication to the man's needs. Jill is only a pseudo liberal. She is as indoctrinated as the older generation in her ideas about sex roles. Her theory is that modern woman's responsibility is now to keep herself attractive in order to please the man, and to fail to do so is cheating. According to her analysis of society, women have given up their identity, no matter how narrow, as the essential bearers of children for the extremely narrow and male-oriented role of the sex symbol; hardly a step forward.

Jill also believes that men's sexual needs are greater and more urgent than a woman's, an idea that has thoroughly been disproved by modern research but one which is essential to the ritual of the play. Jill must believe this myth so that she will respond accordingly.

Jill: Things are very unfair in our society for men. They get these drives and urges when they're twelve or thirteen--

Geo: Twelve. Twelve.

Jill: And they keep them for years and years, and what are they supposed to do about them? (34)
We can assume that these ideas are not given facetiously because they are echoed again in the serious lines of Mrs. Potter in Double Solitaire: "I imagine it has something to do with their sex drive. That's so important to them."³

Jill has been to college, but like all of Anderson's women, her intellect is no threat to the man. She is similar to Dorothy in The Shock of Recognition in that she is a parody of the educated woman rather than the genuine image. Her papers rate only a "C-minus" (34) and she works as a typist. Her most positive qualities are sexual.

She chooses her apartment because:

Jill: I wouldn't be caught dead in one of those new places. The bedrooms are so gleaming and sharp and . . . anti-septic, a man wouldn't know if he was supposed to make love or operate. (34)

She refuses to have an operation on her knee because it will leave a scar, and scars are unacceptable on women although George's scar is masculine; "... scars on a man are rather attractive." (36)

Jill, like all the other surrogate wives, accommodates herself to whatever the man needs. When George asks if she is a morning or night person, she replies; "I guess you could say I'm a morning person . . . But I'm adaptable." (36) In fact, her adaptability is her greatest asset. Unlike Harriet who insists on her own needs and feelings, Jill is ready to adapt to whatever George needs. She is willing and eager to be a part of the ritual and her lack of any unique identity causes her no problems. The message of this play is quite clear; if the wife won't play his game, the husband can always find someone younger,

³Ibid., p. 39.
sexier, and more adaptable who will. When Harriet returns and sug­
gests that she may have been wrong and that there may be some room for
compromise, it is too late. George refuses her offer. He has found
something much better.

Harriet: I could get a better bed board and put it under my side
so that I wouldn't--

George: (Interrupting her, eager.) It's very generous of you,
Harriet, but there's no question. You are right. (37)

George doesn't need Harriet now. In fact, it wasn't Harriet
specifically that he needed in the first place--otherwise she would
not be so easy to replace and he would welcome her back--just some­
thing warm and soft to protect him from the harsh realities of life.
Jill is obviously warmer and softer and now that she is in the picture,
Harriet is forgotten and pushed aside.

These ideas, while light-hearted and comic in this play are pre­
sented quite seriously in other works. The woman who insists on
rejecting her role as comforter and sexual partner may be cast aside.
For the man, it is the ritual that is essential, not the individual
woman. Jill will be favored only as long as she performs her role,
then she too will have to move aside for a more willing partner.
While The Footsteps of Doves is a comedy, the joke is on the women.

I'll Be Home For Christmas

The third play in this collection has a somewhat surprising struc­
ture when one looks closely. It appears at first to be another comical
clash between the sexes. Edith is similar to Harriet in the previous
play in that she is a practical realist without much warmth. Chuck,
on the other hand, is a romantic in the established pattern. Rather quickly, however, the play becomes a serious conflict between two opposing points of view on sex and its effects on the lives of the children. Anderson was aware of this serious element and in a taped interview with David Ayers states that:

"It has to be played with a certain amount of exaggeration and grotesqueness; otherwise it doesn't hold. It becomes too much like Strindberg or some other serious naturalistic play. The woman has to be played larger than life . . . just as Eileen Heckart played it, which is rather prattling, a chattering insensitive woman. They talk at each other. (She talks at him at least.) Once they start talking to each other and arguing in a reasonable way, the play really becomes something else again."

Inevitably, however, the play does become "something else again."

Chuck is a man whose way of life is under attack. He has lived according to his code of values and must now watch these values being undercut by his wife and children. We feel sorry for Chuck just as we feel sorry for David in The Days Between, not because he is right, but because he is fighting against overwhelming odds and we tend to root for the underdog. His primary opponent is his wife, Edith. She is described as being "apparently somewhat insensitive." (39) and she evokes a negative response because of this insensitivity.

What is most surprising in the play, however, is the Oedipal theme that surfaces suddenly and unexpectedly at the end. We learn that Chuck has received a letter from his son that clearly rejects the values of the father. Just as in Tea and Sympathy and I Never Sang For My Father, the active destruction of the father is done by the mother rather than

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the son. It is Edith who spends the entire play challenging Chuck's ideas. By the time the son's rejection is made known, we clearly blame Edith for having instilled such disrespect in her children.

True to the Oedipal pattern, Edith's attack on Chuck is primarily sexual. The play is based on their differing opinions concerning the sex education of their children but the argument spills over into a condemnation of each other. Edith takes the matter-of-fact approach. She has accepted the realities of life as she sees them, while Chuck is still fighting against the inevitable destruction of his romantic ideals. Edith explains to a friend:

Edith: He used to scare the bejesus out of me when he started wondering about the meaning of it all . . . I just don't listen anymore . . . because I know that when he starts saying "What happened?" . . . he's really meaning "You happened" as though I were personally responsible for the high cost of living and the menopause . . . I tell you, kiddo, never marry a man at war with the inevitable . . . (40)

The "inevitable" is the same loss of passion and unavoidable burden of everyday life that besets David in The Days Between, George in The Footsteps of Doves, and Charley in Double Solitaire. Edith represents this reality and she uses it to counter Chuck's overly romantic ideas. She wants Chuck to take a straightforward approach in talking to their son who is "playing with himself." (41)

Edith: I don't want him to look on it as dirty. I want him to look on it as a normal, healthy part of his life. (42)

Chuck refuses because:

Chuck: . . . he may, in spite of your desire and efforts to give it the "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval . . . he may just crave a corner of dirtiness in his life. (42)
Chuck and Edith are both extremists. Edith has become "modern" to the point of losing all emotional response. Chuck, like most of Anderson's men, is caught between an unrealistically romantic view of sex and a desire for a little "dirtiness." Unfortunately for the men, their romantic view is under constant attack from the women in their life and the "dirty" relationships create guilt and are therefore unacceptable.

In the battle between these two points of view, Edith assumes the image of the terrible mother threatening Chuck's masculinity. She hints that he is sexually inadequate.

Edith: Times have changed since the doctor gave you that lecture and scared you so that you're still something of a problem in that area. (43)

And later she adds:

Edith: All I can say is, if I had known earlier in our marriage the peculiar little things you like, we would have been better off. (45)

She undermines his whole self-image by attacking him sexually. Edith, like so many of Anderson's women, sees life from a harsh, realistic point of view. It is this characteristic that makes many of the women in the plays unsympathetic. They are constant, nagging reminders of mundane reality. The men are the romantics who lift the action out of the ordinary and thus draw our sympathy. The lack of logic and reality in their dreams is outweighed by our response to the dreamer. Because of this sympathy for the men, our reaction to the women is less favorable. Despite much validity in Edith's argument, she projects the terrible-mother image and forces us to face reality.
She tells Chuck, "It would be just great with you if we never mentioned anything disagreeable or difficult." (46)

For Chuck, sex must retain some mystery. He tells Edith:

Chuck: Edith, for God's sake . . . I have told them all I think they want to hear from me. Can't you get it through your head that it's grotesque, us talking to them about sex. Sex to them is full of spring and beauty and something old people like you and me don't experience. . . . It's absurd to them that we are capable of feeling the same thing they are feeling . . . And maybe we're not . . . They should feel something unique about love and sex . . . they should feel they're experiencing something unique and personal. (47)

One of the sad things about Anderson's characters, young or old, male or female, is that they believe intense sexual pleasure is an experience reserved only for the young. One reason the men fight so hard against aging is this belief. There seems to be no question that sexual pleasure inevitably diminishes as one ages. The men look back with such yearning to their youth and seek younger and younger women as sexual partners in an attempt to recapture this intense passion. Rather than discover the continuing sexual pleasure of mature love, Anderson's men frantically seek to bring back the passion they have known as young men. Chuck is remembering these feelings when he tells Edith they should "neck on the couch" like teenagers.

Chuck: When's the last time we necked on the couch?

Edith: Once a year you bring up this necking on the couch business . . .

Chuck: When is the last time?

Edith: We got the bed, for God's sake. Why the hell should we neck on the couch? (48)
Edith is as guilty as Chuck in accepting the myth that sexual pleasure diminishes with age. She sees no sense in using the couch for necking because, for her, sex is simply the physical act of intercourse. The extremes of the positions in this play are comical, but the same ideas are evident in the serious plays. John presents a similar attitude in Silent Night, Lonely Night when he sees in Philip the "lovely" past. Harriet presents Edith's same attitude in her practical approach to the twin beds. But the clearest parallel is in the last play, Double Solitaire, where this theme is central to the action of the play.

The difference in Edith and Chuck's approach to sex is readily apparent in their handling of the situation with their daughter. Edith wants to be practical and supply the girl with contraceptives since she has a steady boyfriend. Chuck refuses and argues for the old standard of morality.

Edith: Now, Chuck, you read. You know what's going on.

Chuck: I read. That does not necessarily mean I know what's going on... in real life. I don't believe those kids you read about represent any more than five percent of... It's just not in the instincts.

Edith: But it is the instincts. And now they're getting a chance.

Chuck: There are other instincts... tenderness and affection. They're not good copy... but they are there.

Edith: A boy is out for everything he can get.

Chuck: But I got news for you. With a girl he loves, he sometimes hopes he doesn't get it. (47)
Edith retaliates against Chuck's refusal to face reality by informing him that their daughter is no longer a virgin. There is something very cruel in her insistence that he face this complete truth. It is similar to Barbara's actions in _The Days Between_, and the effect, while not as devastating is similar. Men, in these plays, must have their illusions and in telling Chuck the truth about their daughter, Edith has dealt him a crushing blow.

In many of Anderson's plays there is a clear indication of a double standard, but it is most apparent in this play. The men would like to believe that women are submissive and dependent while the men are in charge of decisions. In the matter of contraceptives, Chuck insists; "It's a boy's . . . a man's responsibility. He should be prepared to handle it." (50) When Edith suggests that a girl should be prepared as well, he answers:

Chuck: The man makes the arrangements . . . at least the first time.

Edith: You mean they stop while he goes hunting for a corner drugstore?

Chuck: Well . . .

Edith: Or does he just happen to have one . . . or an economy size dozen, in his pocket? In which case, what does the girl think?

Chuck: It's different. I can't explain why. But there's a nicety in it somewhere. (50)

The logic of Edith's argument means nothing to Chuck. The ritual requires that the boy take care of things and that the girl remain unsullied. The irony in Chuck's belief that men are active and women passive is that it is diametrically opposed to what is true of the men
and women in the plays; the women are the agents for action while
the men are passive and dependent. The men dream while the women
get the world's work done.

While Edith, like Jill in The Footsteps of Doves seems to be more
modern in her views than some of the other women, she is so negative
her ideas lose their impact. She is such a nagging, insensitive wife
that we turn her off. She is always the aggressor in the arguments,
and Chuck is the poor man fighting back as best he can.

Much of Edith's approach to life is the result of her childhood
training. Like Tom in Tea and Sympathy, Katherine in Silent Night,
Lonely Night, and Barbara in The Days Between, her parents have condi­
tioned her response to sex.

Edith: Don't knock my Dad! He opened my eyes to a great deal
about life and love and the nature of man. With Mother's
"disorders" he had a woman on the side. And he told me
about it quite frankly . . . about the needs of a man,
et cetera. . . . He thought I should know that. . . . (51)

Edith's mother has rejected sex and her father has found the same
solution as the other men, he has a surrogate wife. Edith assumes that
she and Chuck will follow the same pattern. Because of his long busi­
ness trips, Chuck will have affairs just as Katherine's husband does in
Silent Night, Lonely Night. Chuck's denial of such affairs makes him
appear to be different from men such as John in Silent Night, Lonely
Night; but Chuck rejects such affairs because they are "meaningless
rolls in the hay," not because they are morally wrong. We may assume
that if he could find a surrogate wife who offered a "meaningful"
relationship, he would find that acceptable just as the other men in
Anderson's plays do. Chuck is seeking some sense of values that will give meaning to his life, not some definite code of conduct.

Chuck: ... here in the most personal and private core of me, I insist that there be meaning, I want there to be meaning ... I long for there to be meaning. (53)

It is at this point that we learn of the letter from his son rejecting his entire set of values. Just as Chuck reveals himself most openly and we are most sympathetic to him, we learn of his son's harsh letter. Since we are in accord with Chuck, we can only respond negatively to this insensitive boy who has cut his father so cruelly. But the son is the product of his mother's training and thus our negative response is directed at Edith as well.

The play ends with an action very similar to that at the end of *The Days Between*. When Edith hears the letter and realizes that Chuck has been terribly hurt by it, there is a change in her character. She moves back to the livingroom "her concern for Chuck clearly showing on her face." (54) Now that Chuck has been defeated by his son and rendered symbolically impotent by the attack, Edith can become the healing earth mother. She, like Barbara, has destroyed through her attack on Chuck and now she can respond to his need for healing. In her indoctrination of the children she has planted the seeds of rebellion and destruction. She is one of several women in Anderson's works who must destroy in the image of the terrible mother in order to heal as the earth mother.
I'm Herbert

The last play in the series of one-acts is more of a vaudeville sketch than a play. It concerns an old man and woman, both of whom have been married several times. They cannot keep their husbands and wives straight and repeatedly call each other the wrong name or remember incidents in the past that the other never shared.

Anderson described this play to David Ayers as:

... a funny story about two people who couldn't remember each other's names, where they'd been and with whom—but a much more important aspect of it was that if you live long enough and if you've had enough women or men in your life, that they all fused into one at the end, and you accepted the role of all the other husbands or men that the wife had ever had and she accepted the role of all the other wives or women that you'd ever had and you drift off together. It all synthesizes into one person in each case, which I felt was rather a nice thought.

What Anderson is describing is the amalgamation of all the men or all the women into a single archetypal image. There is a movement toward resignation. What we normally think of as communication is totally absent, but there is another and more important form of communication taking place. There is an acceptance of each other and all the ritual roles one must play so that the communication takes place at an unconscious level. There is an unspoken, but mutually understood, agreement to be all things to each other, to become all women and all men for the partner.

In this series of short, one-liners, there are the events of a life-time: the intense passion of young love, birth, death, and

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5Ibid., p. 228.
love affairs. They are the central themes of all of the plays.

Muriel, the wife, reminds Herbert, the husband, of their trip to Venice when they experienced the passion of young love.

Muriel: You're ashamed to remember it because of the scandalous good times we had. (58)

And later she reminds him of another love:

Muriel: She was your first love. You've told me about it often enough. The two of you young colts prancing around in the nude. (61)

Herbert has his own memories of passionate young love:

Herbert: Grace I saw naked. Oh, how naked! There was never anyone nakeder.

Muriel: You can only be naked. You can't be more or less naked.

Herbert: You didn't know Grace. (61)

Funerals are mentioned twice although there is some question as to just who died.

Muriel: Yesterday you said you'd never been to Chicago . . . and I proved you wrong on that. Your second daughter by your first wife died there. We went to the funeral. (58)

Only later she says:

Muriel: And you've never been to Chicago either, I suppose.

Herbert: Never. Why should I have gone to Chicago?

Muriel: Only because our daughter died there and we went to the funeral. (63)

Children are also born, but the circumstances of their conception are in question.

Muriel: Ho-ho . . . and what about that afternoon under the willow tree? I think that's when we conceived Ralph.
Herbert: Who is Ralph?

Muriel: Ralph is your stepson. Good God!

Herbert: I conceived my stepson under the willow tree? (63)

By the end of the play, all the images blend together and all are accepted.

Muriel: Yes, yes. All right. We'll just hold hands here, and try to doze a little . . . and think of happier days. . . . (She takes his hand and they close their eyes and rock.)

Herbert: (After a long moment.) Mmmm . . . Venice.

Muriel: (Dreamy) Yes . . . oh, yes. . . . Wasn't that lovely . . . Oh, you were so gallant . . . if slightly shocking . . . (She laughs, remembering.)

Herbert: The beach . . .

Muriel: The willow tree . . .

Herbert: (Smiling) You running around naked. . . . Oh, lovely . . . lovely . . .

Muriel: Yes . . . lovely . . . (They go on rocking and smiling, holding hands as the lights dim.) (63-64)

This series of one-act plays provides some of Anderson's most delightful writing, but it also contains serious themes that enlarge our understanding of his concept of women. We see in Dorothy and Jill suggestions of the intellectual inferiority of women. We see in Harriet and Edith the negative woman who denies sexual contact to the husband. In Edith there is also the suggestion of the terrible mother who undermines the man's virility and sense of values. Even in the delightfully funny, I'm Herbert, we see the loss of identity as the individual fades into the archetypal image.
These plays introduce several new elements in the themes we have seen previously. The women are becoming more insensitive to the man's sexual needs. They withdraw from physical contact at an increasingly younger age. Edith and Harriet are still young, vital women but they are no longer interested in sex. As a result, the men are turning to very young women who can meet their adolescent needs for exciting, sexual affairs. The ritual of rebirth continues but with surrogates for living wives who are sexually dead rather than physically dead.

The element of laughter that we find in this play disappears in the last two plays and with it the suggestion of a mellowing acceptance that it implied. In the next two plays, Anderson again probes the male-female relationship in a serious tone, and the pain returns.
WOMAN MASKED

Throughout the previous plays the women have moved progressively further away from the ideal ritual role established by Laura in Tea and Sympathy. In Silent Night, Lonely Night, the woman must be persuaded to the role. In The Days Between she uses her role to reduce the man to a child-like state. In I Never Sang For My Father, the role is fragmented and the ritual is ineffective. In You Know I Can't Hear You When The Water's Running, we see young, still vital women beginning to withdraw from sexual activity. The women in the plays up to this point have provided sexual contact in varying degrees, but always to some extent. Now, however, the woman is withdrawing and must be replaced with younger surrogates. In Solitaire, the woman has withdrawn totally and we have only surrogates, women who are participants in a masquerade that is a mockery of the ideal.

Of all of Anderson's plays, Solitaire is the most obviously ritualistic. The play itself forms an outer ritualistic structure and within this is a second ritual, the visit to the Call Family where Sam is involved in an enactment of family life.

Sam is a man whose ideals and moral values are threatened by The System, a form of government in a future time which depersonalizes people and reduces them to numbers. The play opens with Sam confined

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in a Servocell, a self-contained environment which regulates nearly all aspects of life. It dispenses food and drink, regulates the air, and controls his sexual activity which consists of depositing his sperm in a sperm bank. Sam's only consolation in this environment is his pictures and tape recordings of his marriage. His wife and son have both died, but he recreates something of his past happiness by playing tapes of his conversations with his wife and by projecting pictures of her on a screen.

In order to escape this stifling environment, he visits The Call Family, a brothel that provides emotional rather than sexual contact. Meaningful emotional relationships are the outlawed activity in this world of the future. Sam can only play the game of "house" with his "wife" and "children". The Wife mouths cliches without feeling, the Son is petulant and sullen, and the Daughter is pregnant and therefore more attractive to Sam as a surrogate wife than as a daughter. The Madam who runs The Call Family has the magical power to provide Sam's every wish but she also has the power to destroy it. When Sam becomes too emotionally involved with his borrowed family, she asks him to leave. He returns to the Servocell and in desperation for some sort of feeling, pushes the self-destruct button.

The central action of the play is Sam's attempt to recreate meaning through rituals such as the playing of the tapes and the enacting of family life with The Call Family. In each of these rituals Sam attempts to find comfort and protection from the harsh reality of his life. In
each action, the central agent for this comfort is a woman. In this play, as in *I Never Sang For My Father* and *Double Solitaire*, the rituals fail to bring the desired sense of protection and comfort. The primary reason for this failure is the shifting image of the woman. Nowhere in this play do we find the compassionate loving earth mother. She has vanished entirely and in her place we have only a mockery of this image.

Sam is closely linked to other men in Anderson's plays. Like Gene in *I Never Sang For My Father*, he is an agonizer, not a doer. He hates The System but is unable or unwilling to fight against it. He seeks instead to find some way of escaping into a fantasy world, a world of pure ritual in which he can control every element. In other plays, such as *The Days Between*, the man escapes into a dream world of the mind. In this play, Sam designs and controls a physical dream world in which he can actually move about. It is an attempt to bring some emotion and feeling into his otherwise sterile world, but the ritual is false and becomes a mockery of real meaning.

The images in this play are the same ones we have seen in other works. The major image is that of death. The System, which is now in effect, is in itself a form of death. It is a sterile, unfeeling world where people are identified only by numbers, are counseled by computers, are denied meaningful work, et cetera. It has destroyed the family unit and along with it, the comfort and sustenance of sexual activity.
Death is linked directly with Sam's wife, Florence, who has committed suicide because her son was taken away. The child has also been destroyed by The System:

Sam: . . . when he was five, they came to give him his qualifying examination, and he didn't pass and they took him away . . . You know, only so much space, air, food . . . (19)

Males are evaluated on the basis of intelligence and virility, and since the boy has not measured up, he must be destroyed. We do not know specifically how he was lacking, but the evaluation for adult males suggests that it was intellectual as well as potential virility. There is an element of the Oedipal conflict in this situation. The father is dominant since he is able to pass both the intelligence tests and the sperm count which measures virility. The IQSQC, "Intelligence Quotient-Sperm Qualification Count" is the guage of a man's value in this society, and thus his life depends quite literally on his potency and masculinity as well as his intellect. There is no indication of how women and girls are evaluated.

Death is also linked to the image of the Servocell. It is described as "a dimly lighted cell-like room." (3) It is completely self-contained, providing for all the bodily needs such as air, food, water and warmth. It is linked to a central control system where all decisions are made. The Servocell, like the study in Tea and Sympathy, projects the image of the womb, and it is in this monstrous contrivance that we find one central image of woman in this play. The earth mother has been transformed into a terrifying, inhuman machine. The Servocell has both male and female voices suggesting that it represents both parents, but it is predominantly female in nature. It controls
Sam's intake of liquor, it regulates the amount of cholesterol in his
diet, it chastises him for an unpaid bill, it offers marital advice,
et cetera. It is the constant reminder of reality just as many of the
women are. The Servocell, however, is also a death trap and projects
the image of the mother both as the source of life and as a suffocating
form of death.

The image of death is also apparent in the ending of the play.
Sam is like Tom in *Tea and Sympathy*, John in *Silent Night, Lonely Night*,
and David in *The Days Between* in that his only action is self-destructive. When faced with an unbearable situation such men can do nothing
more than choose death whether actual, such as Tom's attempted suicide,
or the symbolic suicide of John's devotion to his insane wife and
David's destruction of his manuscript. Sam is the only character who
actually kills himself and it is really by accident. Sam is not seeking
death so much as a sensation, a feeling. Toying with the self-destruct
button has been one of the few sources of excitement for him, and when
he actually pushes it, he immediately tries to take back his action.
In a sense, he is killed by The System and the Servocell rather than
his own hand. Since both The System and the Servocell are parental
images, he is killed by his parents unfeeling response to his needs.

Another image in this play that we have seen previously is that
of children as symbols of immortality and virility. Sam is fascinated
by the Daughter's pregnant state. He "can't take his eyes off her,
charmed by her pregnancy." (16) Later he "sits looking at her pregnant
belly with appreciation." (17) And again, he is "still struck by her appealing pregnancy." (17) When she sits near him he "looks fondly at her belly" and "makes a small move with his hand . . . He would like to put it on her belly, but he doesn't." (19)

The Daughter's pregnant condition is important because it signifies both sexual activity and proof of virility. Her belly is visible affirmation of the man's potency. Sam is attracted to her because he wants to identify with this sign of life in his otherwise dead environment. Since under The System all children are conceived through artificial insemination, Sam believes that the child could be his. He tells the Daughter:

Sam: It might be my child, you know. I'm an IQSOC 240 and every week, I have to . . . you know . . . (18-19)

Later Sam assumes the Son is his child for the same reason. "So many women have had my children." (20) To have a child, then, is to prove one's manhood; but it is also a sign of immortality in that the son is a continuation of the father. To beget a son is to make a part of oneself immortal. When Sam tells the Madam that he believes the boy is really his son, she replies; "It's not an unusual reaction in a man your age." (20) As Sam grows older and nears death, he looks for some sign of his immortality and the son is that sign.

Sam: This is my son . . . I wonder if you know how rare it is for a father really to meet and know his own son. Look at us. Two peas in a pod . . . (The Son begins to be upset. The Father nods.) You see it. He sees it. (He turns to the others.)
Wife: Come along. Eat . . . Eat. Sister, another dish for Father. (Sam, standing next to Son, puts his arm around his shoulder, and stands next to him for them to compare.)

Sam: Look—same eyes, same mouth, same nose, same build . . . (He draws him closer to his side and starts to ruffle his hair. The Son, genuinely upset at the prospect that he might have a father, pulls abruptly away from Sam and runs out.) Please . . . Please . . . (Back to the others.) There is so much I want to say to him. (25-26)

The reason for the son's resentment is more than simply his fear of a real relationship; it is also his fear of the possessive, smothering relationship that we have seen between other fathers and sons. Both Herb Lee in Tea and Sympathy and Tom Garrison in I Never Sang For My Father try to live through their sons. The son invariably rejects this because he senses that he is valued not as an individual, but only as a part of the father's constant ritualistic attempt to renew life. The fathers value their sons for exactly the same reason the husbands value their wives or the other women in their life; because they are a necessary element in the ritual. The son is resentful for the same reason women are; because they dislike being depersonalized and forced to relinquish their own unique identity.

Two images that appear in this play as well as many others are eating and special celebrations. Sam asks that his time at The Call Family be arranged as if it were Father's Day, an occasion that will place him at the center of attention. Other men feel this same need for a time of heightened emotions. The Madam tells Sam:

Madam: It's a busy evening. I have Christmas going on in there, and Thanksgiving over there . . . Daughter's wedding upstairs. (She underlines on her list) Father's Day. (13)
Each man chooses the event or holiday that best recreates his sense of family happiness. But the significance of Sam's special day is that it, of all the celebrations mentioned, is the one that suggests the man's virility. However, this significance is lost because the children constantly forget and sing Christmas Carols or wish him a "Merry Christmas." This element in the ritual, like so many others, fails to have the desired effect.

Eating is a major image in this play and suggests Sam's strong need for maternal comfort and sustenance. The image is introduced by Sam's choice of the kitchen as the setting for his visit to The Call Family. The room is described as:

... an old fashioned, cozy, messy kitchen. Checkered tablecloth, bowls slopping over with preparations, flour, dough, spice jars, vegetables, fruits, pots, pans, skillets, etc. If possible, an old-fashioned stained-glass lamp. (16)

This setting evokes the warmth and comfort of the home and the loving mother who dominates this area. It is in marked contrast to the Servocell. The Wife is the woman most closely linked to the kitchen, and she is maternal with no sexual connotations. She is linked with the image of eating and nourishment. Thirteen times in her total of thirty-one lines she refers to eating. The kitchen and the Wife form the strongest suggestion of the earth mother that we will find.

The image of physical contact is important in this play. Much of Sam's unhappiness comes from his loss of the qualities he most values, such as touching, kissing, and physical contact. The great
sin under The System is to have a meaningful emotional and physical relationship. One cannot show genuine affection and therefore cannot touch. The Madam tells Sam; "These people find affection very difficult to handle. Many of them have never been kissed." (15) Sex has been reduced to the "dirty" activity Anderson's men find fascinating but reject as unacceptable. The Madam warns Sam; "If you hear the warning buzzer, take off your pants and start making love to your wife." (14) Since sex has become a meaningless activity, it presents no threat to The System and therefore is permissible.

The women in this play continue the images established in earlier works, but there is a new tone that surfaces here. Anderson wrote to David Ayers that the play is "quite a departure for me . . . funny-sad, way out. . ."2 The play is, as Anderson suggests, funny and sad; but it is also bitter and cynical. The images are hollow mockeries; there is nothing real or meaningful behind the masks. The ritual in which they are involved does not simply fail to provide life, it becomes a vehicle for death. Sam is not only a participant in the ritual, but its victim. This ritual which has changed from a life-bringing event to one that results in death is controlled by women.

The Madam is a caricature of both the earth mother and the terrible mother. She has the magical power to clap her hands and create all the elements of Sam's perfect world. She can provide the warmth of the wife/mother in her kitchen setting; a young, beautiful, and pregnant girl to assure his masculinity; a son to assure his im-
mortality; and a senile old father to lord it all over. But if she
has the power to create a fantasy of life she also has the power to
destroy it. With a wave of her hand it vanishes and when Sam dis-
pleases her he is banished forever from this fake paradise.

Madam: I made allowances for you to touch and hold, but you went
far beyond . . . It's very difficult to train these people.
I can't have them being upset like that.

Sam: Please . . . Please . . . I couldn't live without . . .
this once a week, and my tapes of my marriage . . .

Madam: (Very stern) That was my best son . . . You heard the
Captain. He wants that boy. If he can't have that boy
to play trains with, he may let the house be raided.
All thanks to you. Now, get out . . .

Sam: Please . . . Let me . . . let me . . . Listen, you're
very busy here. . . . You need another Father . . . I
could be a very good Father . . . I told you. I had
a child, my own child . . . (She has reached the shadows.
He calls to her, one last appeal. But she is gone.)
(30-31)

As in so many of Anderson's plays, the woman holds the man's
fate in her hands. It is interesting to compare Laura in *Tea and
Sympathy* to the Madam, for surprisingly, they have many of the same
characteristics. Both control the environment in which the action
takes place, both provide the essentials of nourishment, warmth and
protection within that environment. The Madam's actions are a
revealing parody of Laura's actions. When she thinks The Call Family
is being raided, she offers to have sex with Sam in order to protect
them both from arrest. While the scene is funny in a slapstick way,
it is also a sad parallel to Laura's sexual sacrifice for Tom.
(Sound of loud buzzer)

Madam: Oh, God. Take your pants off. Fast. (She starts to undo her blouse.) Take your pants off. The police. (Sam starting to comply, confused. He was getting the bum's rush, and now he must take his pants off.) I told you . . . get them off. The police! (She has her blouse open, and is struggling with Sam's pants, as the Captain comes in. The Captain is a man of fifty or so, in uniform.) Oh, my God, it's just you . . . I've told them a thousand times not to sound the alarm when it's you.

Capt: I'm sorry to disturb you. (Sam, in utter confusion continues to struggle to take his pants off, and half grapples romantically with The Madam.)

Madam: (Brushing him off.) Put your pants back on. It's just the Captain.

(Sam is still confused and embarrassed. His pants have stuck down around his feet, and he is humiliated trying to get dressed while all this goes on.) (29)

The Madam's opening of her blouse makes us think of Laura's similar action at the end of *Tea and Sympathy*, but with a terrible difference. Now the gesture is simply a means of self-preservation, devoid of any warmth or meaning. Once the danger has passed, the gesture is withdrawn leaving the man confused, embarrassed, and humiliated. Clearly, the agent for his humiliation is the woman.

The Wife, while less cruel, is also a mockery of the real thing. She projects the image of the earth mother without any sexual connotations. She is also linked to Laura in her actions such as sewing and offering food. She plays the stereotyped role of "wife" but with such falseness her actions should be an insult to Sam. Unfortunately, he seems to love the attention in spite of the sham.
Wife: . . . right now I need the help of a strong man. (She holds out a jar.)

Sam: Oh, yes. Let me. (He takes it and opens it with ridiculous ease.) There.

Wife: What would we ever do without you!

Sam: (Modestly) Oh.

Wife: When you're away we're all at sixes and sevens around here. (She goes on with her preparations.) Ten times a day I turn to ask your advice. A house simply cannot manage without a man . . . Here. Here . . . Look at this. It broke and none of us can fix it. (She hands him an eggbeater.) See what you can do with it.

Sam: (Looking at it) I'll need a screwdriver. (She produces one immediately from her apron.) Oh, thank you. (He proceeds to effect the very simple repair . . . ) (21)

The tasks she turns over to Sam are insultingly simple. He is, in fact, completely unessential and her patronizing attitude makes Sam look just as ridiculous as he did with his pants down. Sam, however, doesn't seem to notice or care. It is so essential that he live out this ritual, that the falseness of it is not of consequence.

The Wife does allow Sam to show some emotion toward her although she does little to return his affection. His actions reveal the maternal quality of her character as he puts his head against her bosom for comfort.

(Sam suddenly puts his arm around her waist, as she stands near him, and draws her to him impulsively. He turns his head against her bosom. The Father and Daughter rise to protest that the rules are being broken.)

Wife: (Gently, her arm around Sam's shoulder.) No . . . no. It is allowed in this case. Permission has been given.
(She waves the Father and Daughter away. They leave.
When Sam is a bit more in control again.)

Wife: So. Now we eat a little. A little wine. (27)

When the time is up, however, she leaves Sam without a moment's
regret.

Madam: (From off, on her way in.) Time's up. (The wife turns
on her heel and walks off, stripping off her black wig
as she goes. She doesn't look back. Just leaves her
place of work. The lights change abruptly from warm
and cozy to "work light." The Madam, bringing him his
coat and stripping him of smoking jacket in the process,
all very abrupt and businesslike.) (28)

The Daughter is linked to the character of Jill in The Footsteps
of Doves. She is much more a surrogate wife than a daughter. When
Sam first orders his "family" he says of the wife:

Sam: I'm fifty-two, and I would like her to be around twenty-
four, twenty-five ... Well, any age you have, then ... Light hair. Medium size ... Two children, if you can
make it. Teen-agers. (12)

She, like Jill, will be considerably younger than he because she is
primarily a sex object and older women, in Anderson's plays, have lost
their sexual attractiveness. She will be eternally young in spite of
the fact that she has two teenaged children. This is a clear example
of action based on the needs of the ritual rather than logic.

Because of a shortage in young women, the girl must play the part
of the Daughter rather than the Wife. She is described as:

(... around twenty-two, but dressed in a storybook outfit
of a girl of fourteen, not unlike pictures of Alice in Wonder-
land. She is about five months pregnant. She is carrying a
tray with Sam's martini on it. There is something strange and
eerie about her.) (16)
The Daughter is uncomfortable with Sam's attentions and it is often she who sounds the warning that Sam is getting too emotionally involved. When Sam believes the Son is actually his real son, she cautions; "Dad . . . Rules!" and calls for the Madam to straighten him out. (20) When Sam embraces the Wife, she rises to protest that the rules are being broken again.

The Daughter has little part in the action except as a symbol of regeneration. Her primary image is that of sexual partner and visual proof of the man's virility. Near the end of the play, she simply disappears and is not seen again.

As in several other plays, one important female character is talked about but never actually appears physically on stage. Sam's wife, Florence, is seen only in slides that Sam projects on the wall of the Servocell. She is clearly the madonna image, removed from reality by death and worshipped by Sam as the perfect woman. The religious overtones are even greater in this play because of her projected image which Sam sits in front of as he listens to the litany of the tapes of their marriage.

Even in this relationship, however, there is an emptiness. Sam has earlier played a standard tape from central control called "Marriage-Minus-One."

Wifely Voice: Is that you, Honey? (Sam has heard this a hundred times and just lies there.) Did you have a good day? (He snorts at the idea.) Dinner's almost ready. It was a lovely day, wasn't it? (There is, of course, a pause between the questions for the
other half of the conversation. But Sam does not respond.) The man came to fix the television set but he said it couldn't be fixed. We'll have to get a new one. You'd better get yourself a drink or smoke a little grass before I tell you some of the other things that happened. (7)

Later Sam plays the tapes of his own marriage. There is very little difference. Both project stereotyped roles for the husband and wife. There is the added element of sexual contact in his own tapes, but it is also couched in cliches.

Florence: (On tape) Hello, darling. Are you home?
Sam: (On tape) Yes, I'm here.
Florence: Did you shop for dinner?
Sam: Yes. I knew you'd be late . . . How are you?
Florence: (Kissing and snuggling.) Mmmm. I hate it when they keep me late at the office. Get out of the kitchen. I don't want you in here.
Sam: I don't mind. I like to cook.
Florence: But I mind. I'm getting fat on your cooking. Nothing but cream sauces.
Sam: You taught me how to make it.
Florence: Well, I wish I hadn't. Now come on, get out. I'm going to make dinner.
Sam: (Seductive) Why don't we let dinner wait?
Florence: Aren't you hungry?
Sam: Yes. (He makes it clear it's a different kind of hunger.)
Florence: (Laughing) Oh you're impossible.
Sam: You love it, and you know it. (9-10)
This seductive bantering is suggestive of the same type of conversation between Charley and Barbara in Double Solitaire only in this play, the woman is responsive. As the removed madonna image, she can remain pure and yet sexual since she does not become involved in actual sexual contact. Sam can remember her as all the things he desires in the perfect woman.

There is one other character of importance, although he is male. That is the character of the Father. He is important to our understanding of the ritual action in this play and its relationship to similar rituals in others. Once Sam has his mock family around him, they sit at the table for dinner. Sam says grace:

Sam: Dear Lord . . . we thank Thee for what is about to be placed before us. We thank thee for so much . . . but especially for the beauty of the Family, the loving closeness . . . (He is too moved to go on.) Amen. (They all start to serve themselves, and Sam watches for a moment, then gets a sudden idea.) I'd like my father to be here. May I have my father?

Wife: (To the Son) Go see if you can find Father. (He goes.)

Sam: I want him to see me with my Family. I want him to sit at my table and eat my food. (24-25)

The use of the possessive pronoun gives us a clue to Sam's motivation in asking for the Father; "my" Family, "my" table, "my" food. Sam wants to prove himself the dominant male. As the provider and head of the house he can assume this role. The Father's character supports this interpretation. He is a ridiculous old man who never says a single word. He is the image of complete impotence.
(An old man comes in. He is just taking off his Santa Claus cap and beard. He remains dressed in his Santa Claus suit. Sam gets up from the table and comes slowly towards him. It is clear that in spite of the fact that this is an absurd game, the symbolism of this old man reaches Sam. He is Father. The old man stands there, blinking his eyes, confused. Sam comes up to him and embraces him warmly, and holds him.)

Sam: Father, come in... Come in... I want you to sit at my table. To be with my Family. (The Father starts to move to the table. Sam, going to the Son, who remains on the edge of the kitchen.) This is my son. (The Father nods.) This is my son... I wonder if you know how rare it is for a father really to meet and know his own son. (25)

This brief scene is the only instance in all of Anderson's works of a genuinely warm relationship between father and son. When we look closely at the characters we can understand why Sam is able to relate to this old man. Unlike Tom in I Never Sang For My Father, this Father is completely defeated and thus poses no threat to Sam. Sam is clearly dominant. He has the Wife/Mother figure on his side, the young Daughter as visible proof of his virility, the Son as proof of his immortality, and a senile old man who cannot talk back. Sam can afford to strut because there is no danger. The man is not a human being like Tom Garrison, but a symbol of what Sam wants Father to be, weak and defenseless. Now that he is clearly in command, Sam taunts his father reminding him of an incident in which the Father attempted to put Sam in his place, but Sam had the last-word.

Sam: (Sitting at the table.) How have you been, Father? (The Father shrugs.) How do you like my Family? (The Father looks at them and nods "very nice.") Do have a cigar, Father?... Would you smoke a cigar for me? (Calls) A cigar for my father! (The Madam enters with
a cigar box and offers it to the Father. Sam lights a cigar for the Father, who is obviously not a cigar smoker."

Do you remember when you gave me my first cigar when I was ten? You thought it would scare me off smoking. . . . And I sat there at the table and later in the living room and smoked it to the end? (26)

Sam is now involved in the ultimate fantasy. He has become the Father and the Father is in the role of the son. Sam is repeating the same action his father once insisted upon only now Sam can prove how much more of a man he is. When he was forced to smoke a cigar as a youngster, he not only smoked it, but enjoyed it to the very end. Now that the Father is in the same position, he is "obviously not a cigar smoker," and isn't able to match Sam's feat.

In this play as in so many others, it is the ritual that is of importance to the man. It gives meaning to his life, not the individuals who are involved. That it is the ritual that Sam needs is evident from his suggestion that the Wife marry him. He knows nothing about her as an individual, but her role is essential to his life.

It is not her specifically that he needs but what she represents:

Sam: It's all so nice . . . the messiness . . . the confusion . . . the smells . . . (He sniffs her.) Nice, woman smells . . . (28)

When he cannot persuade her to go with him he offers to become part of The Call Family. He is willing to join the ritual permanently rather than lose it. For Sam the ritual and ceremony of family life are essential. It is the idea of the family that Sam tries to create; the idea he remembers from the past. But neither The Call Family or Sam's memory of family life represents reality. The Call
Family is a mockery of the real thing, but so are Sam's memories of his own family. The tapes of Sam's conversations with his real wife are virtually identical to the ones played through the computer for mass consumption. Both The Call Family and Sam's memories are half truths and distortions of reality. The Call Family members masquerade in costumes and wigs, while Sam masquerades his memories in sentimentality and romantic ideals. Sam is content, even eager, for this sham. His obsession with the idea of the family, with the ritual rather than reality, enables him to participate in the masquerade, but it separates him from the very thing he needs—meaningful relationships. Such relationships are what he needs but not what he wants, otherwise he would not be able to bear the obvious falseness of the action. But Sam not only bears it, he relishes it.

Sam: (A broad smile of appreciation on his face.) No ... no ... Let them ... It's lovely. (24)

(Embracing the Wife from behind, fondly.) Oh, this is so good. (24)

(Expansive) I love the . . . (Gestures, trying to include it all.) . . . the disorder of it all. (24)

Please . . . please . . . I couldn't live without . . . this once a week, and my tapes of my marriage . . . (30)

The play makes little reference to women outside of The Call Family. The Madam tells Sam: "I've never had a woman customer. Women don't seem to have any nostalgia for the family . . ." (13)
In this play, as in others, the women are realists to the extreme. They participate in the ritual only because it is their job, presumably they are paid for it. They have, in the truest sense of the word, become whores; they provide comfort and compassion but for a price.

Why do women reject the rituals? This is a central question in Anderson's works, and is more fully answered in the play that follows. Here we are given little insight into why women have no nostalgia for the family and no need for the rituals that reflect family life. Because we are not given any motivation for their seemingly unfeeling attitude, they have a negative quality. There are no compassionate or sensitive women anywhere in this play. Sam remembers Florence as having such qualities, but our view of her is too sketchy for us to draw any conclusions. The negative image of women far outweighs any softening that her character might bring. In this play, women are monstrous creatures who have magical powers over the helpless man. In the end, the parental image of the Servocell, which is predominantly female, becomes the agent of death. As Sam desperately tries to withdraw his decision to commit suicide, the Servocell suffocates him; "You were warned the last step was irrevocable. Someone else is already breathing your air." (33)

When we look at the works as a unit we see a progression that parallels the ritual in each separate play. The first plays are a descent into night, each moving progressively closer to the death that actually occurs at the end of Solitaire. This descent into death is followed by a new awareness and a rebirth. Solitaire is
a play of death. *Double Solitaire* returns to an examination of the motives and attitudes of the women and in so doing brings a new dimension to their character that suggests a positive note. The act of rebirth is not completed in the last play, but it is suggested. *Double Solitaire* is the light at the end of the tunnel.
**WOMAN UNMASKED**

*Solitaire* is a study of loneliness without marriage; *Double Solitaire*[^Anderson] is a study of loneliness within marriage. It is closely linked to *The Days Between* but themes and images are drawn from other plays as well. The central theme is the same search for meaning in the marital relationship that we have seen earlier.

In this play Anderson removes the mask and reveals more of the woman's feelings and motivations than in any other work we have seen. In spite of the fact that Barbara does not speak until the last half of the play, her lines come as a final rebuttal to all that has gone before and they have great impact. For the first time there is some indication that both the man and woman are breaking through the barriers that have prevented communication in the previous plays. While the ending is ambiguous, ideas have been expressed that have not appeared before.

The ritual remains the same in this play, and although we have a greater understanding of the woman's character, she is still trapped in the confining ritual role demanded of her by the man. The male-female relationship is as interdependent as it was in earlier works such as *The Days Between*. Neither partner can escape.

The action of the play is prompted by a special celebration, the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Potter. They have sug-

[^Anderson]: Anderson, *Solitaire* and *Double Solitaire*.

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gested that Charley and Barbara renew their vows at the same time. The trouble is, Charley has lost the intense passion he once felt for Barbara and without it he cannot bring himself to participate in this ritual. Instead he uses other rituals in an attempt to rekindle the emotional response he has lost. He takes Barbara away for a vacation in an effort to establish some intimacy. Instead of a renewal, the confrontation between them reveals all of the loneliness and bitterness of their relationship.

The structure of the play is somewhat similar to the four one-acts in You Know I Can't Hear You When The Water's Running. It is basically an argument between the man and woman with differing opinions being presented. But there is a significant variation; the men's views are always presented in the form of a discussion between two people—Charley and his father, Charley and George, Charley and Peter, Charley and Barbara—but the women's opinions are all presented through monologues. The result is that the women seem more isolated and detached. Charley is always in contact with someone and able to respond or evoke a response. This structural device mirrors the image of the man and the woman in the play. Charley must have constant contact with someone else while Barbara does not feel this need. The device has another, less positive aspect for the women. It does not allow for as full a development of their characters as that of the men's. In the give and take of Charley's discussions with others we see much more of his character and motivation. The women's monologues are
more narrow and restricted and thus the women are not as fully drawn. It is only when we reach the end of the play and Charley and Barbara discuss their relationship that we are given any insight into the women's deeper feelings.

A further aspect of the structure is important to note. Barbara is on stage from the beginning of the play, but she does not say a single word for the first two-thirds of the action. It is not until her final scene with Charley that she speaks. Both her presence on stage and her silence draw attention to her and give added impact to her words when she does speak, but the structure is such that all of the other views and opinions are presented first. Therefore Barbara's lines must overcome the strength of the previous opinions. Just as in *The Days Between*, the man is given the opportunity to develop audience sympathy before the woman has a chance to present her side of the question.

Charley, like all of Anderson's men, uses ritual actions to create meaning and emotion where none exists. The woman is, for him, an essential part of this action and she must play her role in order for the rituals to succeed and for the man to be restored. The conflict occurs because of the woman's different view of the purpose of the ritual. She would have meaning precede ritual; that is, feelings or emotions generate the act rather than the act generates the emotion. It is this basic, insurmountable conflict that creates unhappiness in the male-female relationship.
There are many of the same images in this play that we have seen previously. Flowers are used both as symbols of young, perfect love and as a means of creating a lost emotion. Mr. Potter suggests flowers as a way of bringing some excitement to the marriage; "Bring home flowers unexpectedly for no reason at all." (45) But rituals are failing in this play, and when Charley asks George about his experience in such things, George answers:

George: I did the flowers, of course, and then a slightly too-expensive present for no reason at all... It didn't have the desired effect. Doris was sure I'd been cheating on her. (55)

When Charley asks if he had been cheating, George answers "Not yet," implying that George punishes Doris for being suspicious by doing the very thing she fears. Doris is another example of the woman who is easily replaced when she begins to ignore her husband's needs.

Flowers are used by Charley to signal his conflicting feelings toward Barbara and Maria, another woman with whom he has fallen in love. He starts to send flowers to Maria, but then:

Charley: I found myself in a flowershop ordering her favorite flowers. I wrote out five different messages to go with them... And then I finally said "You can't go this route."... And I picked out some flowers and took them home to Barbara. (58)

Charley starts to send flowers as a symbol of Maria's perfection and his adoration of her, instead he sends the flowers to Barbara in an attempt to create this intense emotion with his wife.

The image of card playing appears in several other plays. In *Silent Night, Lonely Night*, Katherine has been playing solitaire when
John hears her cry for help. In *The Days Between*, Mrs. Walker and Roger play cards to fill their lonely hours. *Solitaire* and *Double Solitaire* use the imagery in the titles and suggest the loneliness of both singleness and marriage. The clearest and most direct use of the imagery appears in Mrs. Potter's speech:

Mrs. Potter: And Ernest and I play cards. I always hated cards, but he finally persuaded me... We play double solitaire... You know, each one lays out his own deck, but you put the aces in the center as they come up, and each builds on them... The play of the cards is lively. We have little jokes about the game... I slap his hand when he plays on a card I was about to build on. And we laugh. And he teases me... It gives us something to do together. (40)

Their marriage has become a friendly game of cards, each living lives that are separate except for occasional and somewhat meaningless contact. They are not unhappy, but Mrs. Potter is described as a woman "who has missed a great deal in her life and knows it." (37) Mr. Potter's approach is to "bite the nail and hang on." (44) The prospect of a marriage that has become nothing more than a game of double solitaire is one of the things that frightens both Charley and Barbara. She tells him in the final scene:

Barbara: Your mother suggested we take up double solitaire. I almost laughed in her face, because what else have we been playing these last years? (82)

Sex is an important image in all of the works, but in this play it is only one of several indications of a larger theme. It is an essential element in the ritual of rebirth and as such reflects the opposing views of the man and woman toward rituals in general. For
the man, sex is necessary to create his sense of life, virility, and immortality. For the woman, sex is an expression of already existing feelings of love. When the emotions die, sex is no longer necessary or desirable. This is why so many of Anderson's women refuse sexual activity; it is no longer essential when the intensity of feeling that they had as young women is gone. Mr. Potter tells Charley:

Mr. Potter: Wait till she goes through The Change. Women are impossible in that period. And at least for your mother, it was the end of . . . (He makes a gesture, knowing Charley will understand.) I mean finished! Without any "I'm sorry's" or "What are you going to do?" . . . And the thing is so damned delicate. Naturally you don't bring it out in the open and discuss it. You just let it ride. Oh, a more aggressive man might have made a big issue of it and blown the marriage sky-high, made the wife think she was some kind of monster. I mean, I didn't think very pretty thoughts when I finally realized what had happened without any mention of my problem. But I didn't say anything to her. You don't say everything you think . . . And I'm a vigorous man in that area. (45-46)

Mrs. Potter is not the first woman to lose interest in sex supposedly because of the menopause. Harriet in The Footsteps of Doves and Edith in I'll Be Home For Christmas both suggest that age and the menopause reduce or eliminate a woman's interest in sex. It is also convenient for the men to blame the woman's rejection of sex on the menopause since it is something over which they have no control and it relieves them of the necessity to look to themselves as part of the problem. As long as they can blame the menopause, they do not have to blame themselves. In this play, however, we begin to see a deeper and
more complex reason for the woman's loss of interest in sex. As the woman becomes more aware of the fact that her husband values her, not as a unique individual, but merely as a part of a ritual, she becomes less willing to participate in that ritual. We will see this clearly in Barbara's lines in the final scene.

Sex does still carry the image of virility and immortality for the man. Charley tells his son, Peter:

Charley: I don't want to embarrass you, but your mother and I never had more pleasure in sex, and I mean in every way, than when we decided to stop . . . taking precautions . . . and tried to have a child. You. (63)

Sex is more pleasurable when it is linked to virility and immortality. For Anderson's men, sex cannot be an end in itself, simply a physical pleasure; it must have ritualistic meaning and the conception of the child provides that. It is interesting that there is nowhere in Anderson's work a discussion of the meaning of conception for the woman. One reason may be that so few of his couples have daughters, the symbols of immortality for a woman. Those couples that do have daughters also have sons except for John in Silent Night, Lonely Night. Laura has a housefull of "sons" and all of the central couples have sons: David and Barbara in The Days Between, Katherine in Silent Night, Lonely Night, Tom and Margaret in I Never Sang For My Father, Edith and Chuck in I'll Be Home For Christmas, Herbert and Muriel in I'm Herbert, Sam and Florence in Solitaire, and David and Barbara in this play. In contrast, there are only a few couples who have daughters, and of those,
none has a significant role except Alice in *I Never Sang For My Father* and the Daughter in *Solitaire*. One can only assume that the birth of a daughter has little significance for Anderson because he deals exclusively with the father-son relationship. Despite the inevitable conflict between father and son, the man must have a son as a sign of his manhood and immortality. Daughters do not provide these qualities.

The image of death also appears in this play, but it, like the image of sex, is part of a larger question that will be dealt with later. Superficial references to death are similar to those in other plays. Suicide is suggested as the solution to a life that has become meaningless and unbearable. Sylvia says:

Sylvia: They say I'll be lonely when I'm old . . . Well, I can always take a few pills or cut my throat . . . (49-50)

Barbara suggests dying as a means of intensifying the passion Charley needs to feel for her. In so doing, she links herself with Jennifer in *Silent Night, Lonely Night* and Meg in *The Days Between*. In each case, the dying wife is adored and worshipped with an intensity that the husband needs to feel.

Barbara: A couple of times I wished I was dying because I thought it might give you that intensity of feeling you want. I fantasied it for months once. And I wondered why you weren't nicer to me when you knew I was dying. (80-81)

Death is also the image of loneliness and isolation as it has been in other plays. Charley tells Barbara:

Charley: . . . I do feel the need to be closer to you, somehow, some way. We've been so distant I begin to feel I'll freeze to death without some contact. (81)
We have seen in earlier works the image of women as realists and men as romantics. The idea is evident in this play as well.

Mrs. Potter, in her opening monologue, says:

Mrs. Potter: ... men are the romantics, so full of nostalgia for the past they thought was so happy. I remember my youth as rather miserable. Ah youth, that happy time when I was so sad! ... But they remember it as so happy ... I imagine it has something to do with their sex drive. That's so important to them. I remember my fifties as being my happiest years. The children were grown, there were grandchildren whom I could cuddle for a few minutes and then thrust back into their mother's aching arms. (She laughs) Another of Ernest's romantic ideas has always been to move to the country, to a farm. Get away from it all. The simple life. Family picnics under the spreading maple trees. Of course he forgets the mosquitoes. Men always forget the mosquitoes ... I do hope they've removed Thoreau from school reading lists. The image of that dreadful shack at Walden has made more men unhappy and wrecked more marriages ... (39)

This same idea is borne out in Mr. Potter's lines. He is the romantic spirit while Mrs. Potter is the one who points out the mosquitoes. He tries to get Charley to develop the romantic spirit believing it will help the faltering relationship with Barbara.

Mr. Potter: Bring home some flowers unexpectedly, for no reason at all. Whisk her away on a trip on the spur of the moment ... Your mother keeps telling me, "You can't play the show over again." But it never hurts to try. (A better idea) Take her for a night to a hotel here in your own city. There's something very exciting about that.

Charley: (Smiles) Did you do all those things, Dad?

Mr. Potter: (The old sport) Most of them. And a few more. Your mother wouldn't go for the hotel. She said it was ridiculous for us to go to a hotel when we had our own apartment. Your mother sometimes lacks the light touch. (45)
Mrs. Potter's lack of the "light touch" is similar to Edith's refusal to "neck on the couch" in *I'll Be Home For Christmas*. Such women have no need for romantic rituals and their insensitivity to the needs of their husbands makes them seem unfeeling and calloused. They attempt to discourage such romanticism in their husbands.

Twice Charley mentions Barbara's displeasure with his seeing other men who encourage his romantic ideas. He tells George:

Charley: Barbara hates for me to spend time with you. She says you give me wild ideas. She says I always come home restless and grind my teeth in my sleep. (51)

And later he tells his son:

Charley: You know your mother dreads it when I go to visit you and Melinda. I get painfully nostalgic for all that . . . and I come home with a tremendous desire to simplify my life. (62)

Barbara dislikes these visits because they increase Charley's desire for the passion he felt in his youth, and in order to feel that passion he must insist Barbara participate in the rituals which he believes will create them.

The dramatic alignment in this play is the same conflict we have seen in each of the earlier works. The basic struggle is between the man's fear of death and his search for life through physical contact with the woman. The primary means of achieving this sense of life is through the ritual of sex, but other rituals are used in preparation for the final one. Mr. Potter clearly describes the use of rituals for the man.

Mr. Potter: I put great store by form and routine and ritual. They sound dull, but they carry you along. A lot of times in my life, I haven't felt like doing a
thing. I didn't care if school kept or not. But I went ahead and did whatever I was supposed to do. And often I'd get a surprise. Half-way through, there suddenly was some feeling. Presents I'd give your mother. Hell, sometimes it starts out as a perfunctory note from my secretary. "Don't forget your wife's birthday." And I've got no interest in it. And very little love for her on that particular day... And then I make the effort and don't just send my secretary out for something. And before I've finished selecting the present, I can't wait to get home and give it to your mother. And at that moment I love her. (44-45)

This is the clearest description of the use of rituals to create feeling that we find in any of the plays. In the doing of the thing, emotion is created. This use of rituals is characteristic of all of the men. George, Charley's friend, has tried them all. He has sent flowers, bought gifts, taken her dancing and dragged her off "on the spur of the moment to some romantic weekend spot." (55) In each case the ritual has failed to have the desired effect, perhaps explaining why George is a "cynical old bastard." (51)

George: I took Doris to Pennsylvania--Bucks County--no luggage, no nothing. I just grabbed her one summer evening, shoved her in the car, and went... We had to stop in the village down there to get a bathrobe, because she said what if the john were down the hall? And while we were buying the bathrobe we got a sweater and skirt because it was turning chilly, and under the circumstances I wanted her to be happy... Anyway... the whole damned thing turned into a shopping expedition. (56)

Clearly Doris is another woman who "lacks the light touch" and is insensitive to her husband's attempts at a romantic escapade. Why do the women in Anderson's later plays reject the rituals? Why
are they so insensitive to the man's need for romance? To answer these questions we must look closely at the women who appear in this play.

Mrs. Potter is described as:

... seventy-one patrician ... a lady who has missed a great deal in her life and knows it, but doesn't know just how it happened. She is a composed woman who speaks rather thoughtfully. A note of philosophic acceptance. (37)

She is very similar to Margaret Garrison in I Never Sang For My Father. She loves poetry and gardening; and while her relationship to Charley is apparently not as close as Margaret and Gene's, she is a gentle, loving mother. There are indications that her marriage has not been particularly happy although she has accepted this graciously.

Mrs. Potter: In every marriage more than a week old, there are grounds for divorce. The trick is to find, and continue to find, grounds for marriage. (39)

Early in Mrs. Potter's speech we find the first indication of the woman's attitude toward love. She is telling Barbara about the slides they plan to use at the anniversary celebration.

Mrs. Potter: You haven't seen the pictures for a long time, but wait till you see his face, looking at you with such adoration ... You know, Barbara, you were only his third girl ... He never would play the field. There was Betty when he was seven ... Oh, yes, he started very young, head over heels in love. It's always had to be head over heels for Charley, or nothing ... I used to say to him, when he couldn't get his special girl for a party, "Call up someone else. You don't have to marry the girl." But he wouldn't. He'd sit home and write the special girl a long love letter ... I would have found it a great strain to have someone that devoted. ... (38)
The man's intense devotion is essential to him but it places a great burden on the woman who becomes responsible for his happiness and his life. We saw this in the relationship between Jennifer and John in Silent Night, Lonely Night. The woman rejects the role of savior because she must ultimately assume responsibility for the man's life and the burden of guilt if the relationship fails. In Tea and Sympathy Laura tells Bill she has failed him; in The Days Between, Barbara says she has done a terrible thing to David; and in this play, Barbara tells Charley, "we were taking some kind of exam, and I know I'm going to flunk it." (76) The women come to realize that no one can assume the burden of responsibility for another person's happiness. To make someone responsible for one's happiness is to burden them with an unbearable task. This is what Jennifer is trying to tell John when she asks for the annulment of their marriage.

Mrs. Potter's reluctance to have "someone that devoted" may explain some of the unhappiness in her marriage. We can assume that Mr. Potter felt the same need for intense passion that all of Anderson's other men feel. She indicates that he, like Charley, has been a romantic who wanted to "move to the country, to a farm." (39) Her response to this has been to withdraw into her own life, no longer engaging in sexual activity. She accepts a marriage that is a game of double solitaire, separate lives that touch only occasionally.

Mrs. Potter projects primarily the earth mother image, but in her refusal to engage in sex, there is the suggestion of the terrible
mother or witch image. Since she does not have a close relationship with any of the male characters, she does not project a strong image of any kind. She is less possessive than Margaret, less giving than Laura, less frightening than Barbara in The Days Between.

The second woman to appear is Sylvia, "an extremely stylish woman around forty." (48) She is a divorcée and a friend of Barbara's. She is interesting because she is a woman who has accepted totally the use of rituals. She is very similar to the women in The Call Family in that she lives in a ritualized world but one that has virtually no warmth or meaning. The ritual of her life is as much a mockery of true emotions as that of The Call Family. She tells Barbara:

Sylvia: "Don't you get lonely?" they ask me. Who has time to be lonely? "Who do you see?" My God, I see their husbands. Not my friends' husbands, of course. I use some discretion. And it's not all sex, or even mostly . . . I find that every man has enough interesting happen to him in a week to fill one evening's conversation.

Mondays I see this movie bug. He has to sit near the screen, and his wife has to sit far back. For years they compromised and sat in the middle and spoiled it for both of them. Also, she is an easy weeper and cries at almost everything, which annoys him and makes him feel insensitive. And he laughs easily, which makes her feel she has no sense of humor . . . So . . . Tuesdays I see this man who loves games . . . particularly Scrabble. His wife thinks games are frivolous, and besides she can't spell . . . Wednesday is matinee day, and there's this sweet older man. He doesn't like to sit up late, so we have an early dinner after the matinee and I go home and get to bed early. A-lone. He's just had a heart attack, so that's why I'm free today . . . Thursday I have lunch with this nice homosexual boy. That takes care of my mothering instincts . . . Thursday nights there's this man who likes to come and sit
in my neat, pretty, attractive apartment . . .

His sexual relations with his wife are marvelous, but she's such a slob about her house. So he just comes and sits in my apartment and we talk. Each time he comes, he walks through my rooms and looks at them, shaking his head . . . Friday and Saturday nights are heavy date nights . . . Sundays I have The New York Times, and I do my other reading to keep up with the various interests of my dates . . . Scientific American . . . Art News . . . Cahiers du Cinema . . . Fortune . . . Sports Illustrated . . . (48-49)

As one looks more closely at Sylvia she becomes more and more the depersonalized woman. She is like The Madam in Solitaire, able to create for the man whatever environment or activity he seeks. She is also like Jill in The Footsteps of Doves in that she provides companionship for men with unhappy marriages. Sylvia is a woman with no identity of her own, no sense of her own self. She is the epitome of the surrogate wife, changing identities as she changes men, assuming whatever role is necessary for the ritual of the moment. She charts her life by the men who visit it and without them she is nothing. Even when she is alone she is preparing for her various roles, reading to "keep up with the various interests" of her dates.

One cannot help but ask the question, why does she live this life? She tells us the relationships are not based on sex or money. She does not mention love or even affection for these men. She is similar to Norma in I Never Sang For My Father in that she apparently asks nothing from these men in return for her attention.

We must ask again the question, why do women become like Sylvia? There are two answers suggested in her speech. One is that she, like
other women in Anderson's plays, responds to the man's need. As we have seen from Laura on, Anderson's women find their identity in meeting the overwhelming need presented by the man. But in this play there is a significant change; the needs of these men are petty and trifling. It is a grim view of marriage when men seek other women because their wives cry at movies, can't spell or fail to keep the house clean. The problem is, Anderson's men adore and worship the woman who is the ideal and any flaw creates disillusionment. Ideally she must be all things to him and he to her and when this impossible goal is not reached, he turns to another woman looking for the ideal again. This need to be everything to the partner is what Mrs. Potter is referring to when she describes Charley's adoration as a burden.

No one can meet every need of another person, and yet Anderson's men expect this of the marriage relationship. The inevitable failure sends them seeking other women in hopes of finding the ideal.

Sylvia's second reason for choosing the life she leads is linked to the first. She says:

Sylvia: Now and then, of course, one of them asks me to marry him. A kind of conditioned reflex learned at Mother's knee... to make an honest woman of me. I find they usually ask at just about the time they're getting tired of making an effort. They're ready to take me for better or worse and for granted... I much prefer to be a visitor in a person's life. I get treated with much more consideration. (49)

Her lines suggest that she prefers the non-identity of her ritualized life to the non-identity of a meaningless marriage. While her relationships may not be meaningful, she has no false expectations
Sylvia has chosen to play life as a game of solitaire, finding the loneliness of being single preferable to the inevitable loneliness of marriage. But there is a hard edge to her character and her lines are touched with bitterness. Her choice is not a true choice since the play implies that a woman alone, for whatever reason, becomes bitter and cynical. There is no joy in Sylvia's life and she is essentially a negative character.

One other female bears analysis before we turn to Barbara. Melinda, Peter's girl friend, does not appear in the play, but her image is essential to our understanding of Barbara. Melinda represents the young, perfect woman. She is the image Charley remembers and tries to discover again with Barbara.

We know Melinda only through Peter's lines about her and the film he has made depicting their relationship. The film, along with the slides that are used earlier, is one of the most interesting rituals in Anderson's works. If a ritual is, as we have defined it in the Introduction, a repetitive act following a predetermined pattern which is used by the participants to recreate a specific emotion, then the projecting of the film is the ultimate ritual. The film freezes forever, in a series of detailed frames, the actions of the
participants. The film, when projected, repeats the same actions over and over again without any deviation. The lovers are eternally young, eternally beautiful, and eternally in love. The flowers bloom forever and the realities of life never descend into the perfect celluloid world.

Peter's film is an expression of the ideal love sought by all of Anderson's men. It is important, therefore, to look at it in detail.

The title: "I'm home!" Then . . . "A film by Peter Potter." The film is a lyrical evocation of a young man's coming home in the evening to the girl he loves. We start with his getting off a bus, weaving and skipping his way through the crowd of other people coming home from work.

He stops and buys an evening newspaper. He jogs to his next destination, a fruit and flower stand, where he buys a loosely wrapped small bunch of flowers . . . very cheap. And he continues on his way, breaking into a trot as he turns into his own street . . . a street in the Village . . . Spring . . . a few trees out . . . flowers on the window ledges, people sitting on the stoops.

On the run, he turns into his own quaint building, looks for mail, sees none, goes in. He bounds up the stairs, opens his door, enters his apartment, which is only one large room with just the essentials . . . He calls out for Melinda (silent film). "I'm home." Sees a simple table, simply set. Looks in the tiny kitchen, but she isn't there. He shucks off his coat and proceeds to the bathroom, where the water is running. He goes in.

It is a large old-fashioned bathroom. Melinda is taking a steamy bath. She drapes a wet washcloth across her breasts in pretended modesty. He presents her elaborately with the flowers. She laughs and reaches out for them (playacting). He kneels down beside the tub and kisses her. The washcloth slips into the water. He continues to kiss her while she's holding the flowers, giggling, not having any place to put them . . . He starts to stroke her wet breast, still kissing her and enjoying her awkward protests . . . His hand goes under the water, shirt-sleeve
and all, and she laughs as his mouth goes to her neck . . . As she laughs delightedly, she lets go of her flowers and they scatter on the water . . . We draw back quickly and stop action on the scene, the girl in the tub, the young man kissing and fondling her . . . and the flowers floating on the surface. (67-68)

The image of the woman in this film is one we have seen before. It is the past that David remembers with Barbara in The Days Between, that John remembers with Jennifer in Silent Night, Lonely Night, that Sam remembers with Florence in Solitaire. The woman is the ideal; young and sexual but with a certain innocence. She exists only for the man's pleasure, waiting always for him when he returns home. The flowers are the symbol of her perfection and of the man's worshipful adoration of her. She is his reason for being, his reward at the end of a hard day, the source of his "inspiration," the "condition of his life." In Peter's lines about her, these same feelings are echoed:

Peter: . . . my feeling for Melinda has made all the difference in my life. You saw it. I was nothing before she came along. All right, so they tell us it can't last. We don't believe that. We believe we have something quite special, and if we watch it . . . But, if it doesn't last, neither of us can imagine living without that . . . (He searches for the word "intense" but his tension expresses it.) . . . feeling for someone. We've promised each other . . . (He half-kiddingly raises his hand to take an oath) To love or . . . (66)

Peter's naiveté makes him seem much younger than his twenty-two years. Anderson's men, including the mature men, seem to have no understanding or appreciation for mature love. The only emotion of value is intense passion. Once that has gone, there is nothing. It
is no wonder the men all suffer disillusionment, their expectations are completely unrealistic. We must ask what happens to the woman who sees her husband’s inevitable disappointment when passion fades. What effect does it have on the wife whose husband frantically tries to recapture this lost emotion?

Before we turn to Barbara, it is necessary to look at Charley’s expectations of her and their marriage. Much of her image is formed by the lengthy discussions Charley has earlier in the play. Like The Days Between, this play allows the male character to establish his ideas very early in the action. Charley tells George what he really wants in life:

Charley: I wanted the house to burn down. Or maybe I wanted my whole life to burn down . . . And then I'd sit in a bare white-walled room, and anything or anyone who wanted "in" to that room or my life would have to pass the most rigorous test for meaningfulness . . . And I would want to start in that room with a woman. Because I'm no good as a swinging single . . . A woman about whom I could feel and continue to feel with such intensity that my whole life would take on meaning . . . Because that's the way it was when Barbara first came into my room . . . I was nothing . . . (He stops . . . then after a moment, starts to smile) Then, of course, I started coming to. I realize that she would need clothes, and that I'm bored in one room . . . and we'd want children . . . and . . . and . . . and . . . And I join the human race. (53)

The parallel between Peter and Charley is striking. Charley is looking for the moment Peter has captured on film, the young, sexual woman waiting to give meaning to his life. Both men say that they were nothing until they met the woman in their life. To be "nothing" is a form of death. The woman brings life, but life can only be felt
in that moment of intense passion. Charley believes it is lost because of the everyday realities such as clothes, food, children, boredom, et cetera. These are the "mosquitoes" of life that Mrs. Potter refers to, and they are represented by the women. Thus women bring life, but ultimately destroy it by insisting on reality. The man tries to recapture the essence of life through rituals that create the intensity of emotion he once felt. To lack feeling of such intensity is to be threatened with emotional death. Charley tells George:

Charley: I sense something about myself, that I could be the damndest most detached person, and I could freeze to death somewhere out there in the cool world, without this connection with life through my feeling for someone . . . That's why this blandness terrifies me. I feel my spiritual temperature dropping, and I get scared, and I reach out desperately for some saving intensity and intimacy. (He pauses for a moment . . . then . . .) Barbara and I achieve this intensity and intimacy sometimes in sex. There can be nothing, and then . . . something. Primitive. A connection and intensity. And it dissipates this blandness and emptiness for a while . . . It used to be a joke, when I was in college. I always fell in love with anyone I went to bed with. Fortunately, it still works . . . even when all the other lines of intimacy and communication are blocked. (54)

This is one of the most important speeches in all of Anderson's plays because it so clearly outlines the man's need for the woman. Charley begins by describing his death-like state of being, "freezing to death," which is caused by a "blandness" or lack of feeling. In order to save himself, he turns to sexual contact which creates a "primitive" connection. Charley does not say he needs Barbara, the
specific and unique woman he loves. He says he needs "some saving intensity and intimacy." It just so happens that he can achieve this with Barbara, but if she is not able to provide it, he can find it elsewhere. The individual woman is not essential, the action is the important thing. We know this because of the last lines. Charley says, "I always fell in love with anyone I went to bed with." This is quite different from saying, "I always went to bed with anyone I loved." For Charley, the act of sex created the emotion of love which was the result of gratitude. The woman gave him a sense of life, therefore he loved her. Sex is not an expression of an already existing emotion, but a device for creating the emotion. As we look at Barbara, we will discover that this is the great problem in her relationship with Charley. He has not changed and still uses sex as a means of creating feeling. For the woman, the feeling of love must precede the act of sex, therefore tension is created in the relationship.

Our initial impression of Barbara is negative. After having sat in total silence throughout the play while we listened to Charley pour out his unhappiness and frustrations, her first lines consist of pointing out all the "mosquitoes" at the vacation spot he has picked for them. He has taken her to the Bahamas to a beach that reminds him of one they visited when they were young. While Charley tries to create some romance, Barbara can only point out the faults: "... this Godforsaken shack ... I want to scrub this place down ... I can't prepare meals in this grime." (60)
The first part of the scene is a battle of wills between Charley and Barbara. He persistently introduces sexual imagery and she just as persistently rejects his advances. As he becomes more insistent, Charley's language becomes more explicit and vulgar. He goes from a discussion of bizarre places for having sex, to a description of a particularly well-endowed fraternity brother. During this rather pathetic attempt to arouse Barbara's interest, several important ideas are introduced. Twice, when Barbara protests Charley's actions, he remarks "Just keeping contact" (71-72) indicating his need to have bodily contact with the other person.

When Barbara tells Charley he has become a "damned chatterer," he answers:

Charley: Remember when we went to Europe on our honeymoon and we saw all those middle-aged couples sitting at tables and staring into space and saying nothing . . . and you reached over to me and said, "Promise me, Charley, you'll always keep talking. Anything. Something. Just keep talking to me." (71)

The problem is, Charley has stopped talking to Barbara in any meaningful way. He "chatters" now in inane references to sex.

There is no true communication in his words, instead "chatter" has become a barrier to communication. Barbara tells him:

Barbara: . . . Once in a restaurant, I saw you at one of those tables in the corner with a lovely woman, perhaps one of your writers. And you were talking, talking. I couldn't hear you, but I could see. The way we used to talk. Your eyes were looking at her, into her, not just towards her. And I said something to myself, and it shocked me. I said, "I wish he'd go to bed with her and talk to me." (79)
Anderson's men communicate through sex or other physical contact while the women need verbal communication. The reason for this is linked to the concept of the role of the woman in the ritual. For the man, it is necessary only that the woman perform certain acts such as sexual intercourse, comforting gestures, et cetera. For the woman, it is essential that she be seen as a unique individual, and her uniqueness lies in her inner feelings which can be expressed only through verbal communication. When the man refuses to talk in a meaningful way, he refuses to see her uniqueness and thus the woman feels depersonalized and experiences a loss of identity.

As Charley continues to try and arouse Barbara with his titillating references to sex, she tells him:

Barbara: --I don't want to hear it. I'm a middle-aged matron now. Old enough to be the mother of the girl you were talking to. (75)

Conflict between the man and woman often arises because of his reluctance to grow up and her eagerness to grow old. Charley would like to remain an intense youth all his life while Barbara is willing to become middle-aged too soon. The man's reluctance to mature is based on the fact that he sees youth as the only valuable period in one's life. It represents "life" while middle and old age represent "death." The woman does not feel this same reluctance to mature because they do not continue to need "intense" emotions. They welcome middle and old age as a means of escaping the rituals their husbands insist upon.
Once Charley realizes his bantering approach is not going to work, the scene turns serious. Barbara explains to him why she cannot respond to the weekend he has arranged:

Barb: (Shies away a little.) I don't know. The whole thing. It's such a set-up. (She looks at him, hoping for help) Your sentimental and nostalgic presents every fifteen minutes on the plane... Then this shack, miles from any place.

Charley: I'm sorry it's so... (He gestures "ratty")

Barb: There's something so desperate about it. (She looks at him, questioning. He won't admit it.) As though we were taking some kind of exam, and I know I'm going to flunk it. (76)

Barbara senses the responsibility Charley wants to place on her. He would deposit his life with her and thus make her assume the burden of his happiness. The presents on the plane are attempts to persuade her to accept the role of savior, life-bringer, through sexual contact. If she fails she will have to assume the guilt as well. Barbara is no longer willing to bear such responsibility. To do so means sacrificing her identity in order to become the ritual image Charley needs. She can no longer accept sex without feeling.

Barb: ... It's just that lately I get the feeling that we're not just making love. We're trying to prove something. "I do love my wife, and I'm going to prove it by making love to her. See how much and how well I'm making love to her."

Charley: Barbara...

Barb: (Running on) Only you have to have a couple of drinks to make a quick connection, to by-pass all we really are till our bodies take over. (77)

Charley is not only trying to prove something, he is trying to create something--the intense emotion he once felt for Barbara. Only
it grows more difficult as time passes and he needs a drink to get
him started.

The great revelation in this play is that Barbara has figured
Charley out and in so doing she has figured out all of Anderson's
other men. Unfortunately it does not make her a positive character.
There is an underlying resentment that she should have done so. What
she discovers is that the men, contrary to what they say, do not seek
intimate relationships with their wives; they seek to avoid them.
The means of avoiding such a relationship is the ritual. It allows
the man to relate to the woman as an object, external and removed,
rather than as an intimately known, unique individual. Barbara
tells Charley:

Barbara: We used to go through all we really are and end up
making love. Now it's nostalgia and martinis ... Oh, I'm saying terrible things I never thought I'd
say, and I'm jumbling them all together ... But we are here ... (Suddenly loud ... blurt ing it
out.) And I must say these things! (Charley realizes
that it is not the time to question or challenge
... This may be irrational, what she's saying, but
it's the truth of how she feels ... he moves again
to hold her, she shies away.) ... I have the feeling
that we're two systems of nerve ends, which we manip­
ulate expertly, desperately. Your hands and mouth are
everywhere, expertly playing the instrument. But where
are you? Where's Charley? And where am I? ... You
move on, desperately trying to reestablish some in­
timacy. But not with me, Barbara ... One night, so
long ago, I said while we were making love, "Oh, I
love you so." You should have seen your eyes. Your
body and your arms responded tenderly, but your eyes
opened in shock and fright at that kind of intimacy
... I can't tell you how indecent I feel sometimes
in bed with you. We've glided by each other for days
or weeks, never touching. I don't mean physically.
And then suddenly there we are in bed, naked, servicing
each other ... And I sometimes feel like a whore with
a stranger ... A stranger who then suddenly tries to
prove he's in love with me ... But I can't respond,
except physically, because I don't know anything about him . . . (78)

It is important to analyze this speech carefully because it contains some of the most revealing lines Anderson has written about woman. It shows us the inner feelings and motivations of the woman more clearly than we have seen previously. In this speech, Barbara is not just earth mother, soul mate, witch or whore, but a unique and genuine individual.

She begins by referring to the necessity of emotion preceding action. "We used to go through all we really are and end up making love." Now Charley must turn to the ritual of nostalgia, repeating predetermined actions in an attempt to recreate the feeling he once had. Her description of his love-making clearly establishes it as ritualistic. He repeats the same movements, the same techniques, striving for exactly the right pattern that will guarantee an intense sensation that will make him feel alive.

When Barbara confronts Charley with genuine emotion, true love, he withdraws and cannot accept it. "... your eyes opened in shock and fright at that kind of intimacy." As a result of Charley's inability or unwillingness to see her as an individual, she becomes, to herself, a "whore with a stranger." It is for this reason that she cannot continue the ritual. It turns her into an image she cannot accept.
Charley's response to Barbara's speech is to reaffirm his belief in the power of the ritual.

Charley: (Gently) Each time . . . most times when I make love to you, I feel closer to you . . . more intimate, more deeply connected, after. It is a way of reestablishing intimacy, contact. (79)

The key word is "after." Charley feels closer and more intimately connected after sexual contact. And so they are caught in an impossible situation. Neither can change and yet Charley must have this physical contact or he will die emotionally.

Charley: . . . I do feel the need to be closer to you, somehow, some way. We've been so distant I begin to feel I'll freeze to death without some contact. (81)

*Double Solitaire* is in many ways Anderson's saddest comment on married life. There is no resolution and little hope of any. Charley doggedly continues to insist that Barbara play her ritual role even though she tries to refuse. She pushes him away and he "moves closer to her, touching her face, caressing." (82) In a moment of tremendous irony, Anderson ends this play with an action that parodies the ending of *Tea and Sympathy*.

(Charley starts to unbutton her blouse . . . She looks at him, smiling sadly . . . She touches his head . . .)

Barbara: You won't find anything there you haven't found a thousand times before. (83)

The man has been reduced to begging for the comfort and sustenance that was once given willingly. But the ritual prevails, and Barbara's final gesture is compassionate: "She looks at him.
smiling sadly . . . she touches his head." She has not escaped, but is as trapped in the dependent relationship as she was at the beginning of the play.

The struggle in this play is very similar to that in The Days Between only it is the woman who attempts to break free in this case. Barbara, like David, realizes that her only hope is to disentangle herself from her dependent relationship with Charley, but she cannot escape. Charley is able to hold her in the confining web just as Barbara holds David in the earlier play. Never, in any of the plays, are the men and women able to break free and become strong, independent persons. It is this that gives Anderson's work an overall pessimistic tone and it is this that entraps all of the women in his plays.
CONCLUSION

Burke and Jung maintain that art is an expression of man's inner experiences and feelings conveyed through symbolic language in the form of rituals. They see the function of art as a means of purging man of guilt and redeeming him from it. By discovering the purpose of the ritual of purgation and redemption for the characters within the plays, we can then know the function of the ritual for the audience. In analyzing the ritual we discover the role of the woman and thus her archetypal images.

Since symbolic language is both a conscious and an unconscious expression, it is necessary to go beyond the superficial events of the play and to study the underlying meaning. The inner action is revealed through three primary elements; structure, imagery and dramatic alignment.

**Structure**

The basic structure of all of Anderson's plays is a ritual of death and rebirth. In some plays the ritual is incomplete or ineffective, but it forms the basis for all of the plays. Burke believes that all men suffer feelings of guilt and that art seeks to purge and redeem them from this guilt. When we look at Anderson's plays we see that the ritual of death and rebirth involves the purgation and redemption of which Burke speaks.
In analyzing the ritual we must first determine the source of the guilt the men feel—in Anderson's works it is always the male character who seeks the ritual of rebirth and bears a sense of guilt. Every male character shares two common qualities: each is isolated from one or both parental figures, most often the mother figure; and each feels a sense of guilt for having failed to achieve the ideal relationship with the parent or spouse.

In the beginning of *Tea and Sympathy*, Tom is separated not only from Laura who is the primary maternal figure but from his natural mother and his father. The charges of homosexuality make Tom doubt his manhood and thus he feels that the failure to achieve the ideal relationship with Laura and his father is the result of his supposed sexual inadequacy. Laura's sexual sacrifice is made in order to rid Tom of his guilt and to reassure him that he is capable of achieving the ideal relationship with a woman.

In *Silent Night, Lonely Night*, John is isolated from Jennifer who is the madonna, an image that incorporates the maternal qualities of the woman. He fails to achieve the ideal relationship with her because his affair with another woman has resulted in the death of the child and Jennifer's insanity. John must bear the responsibility for their failure to achieve the ideal relationship. In *The Days Between*, David is separated from Barbara because of his writing and when he learns of the death of the unborn child, he feels he must bear the responsibility for this. *I Never Sang For*
My Father is unusual in that the primary separation is from the father figure rather than the mother. Gene fails to achieve the ideal relationship with his father for the same reason Tom fails in Tea and Sympathy, because he does not meet his father's criterion for manhood. But Gene's guilt also arises from his having won the mother away from the father and for his having caused, at least indirectly, the death of his mother.

Because of the sketchy characterization in the four one-act comedies of You Know I Can't Hear You When The Water's Running, it is difficult to determine the cause of guilt in any but the third play. We can only surmise that George in The Footsteps of Doves may feel some guilt for having an affair with Jill, but there is insufficient information to make a serious analysis of the play. The same is true of The Shock of Recognition and I'm Herbert. However, in I'll Be Home For Christmas, the two elements are apparent. Chuck is isolated from Edith and has failed to achieve the ideal relationship with her. There are no deaths or affairs to cause guilt, but the letter from Chuck's son suggests that Chuck's sense of values may be the cause of the failure of the relationship between him and Edith. His insecurity concerning his values creates his isolation and unhappiness.

Solitaire does not follow the same pattern as earlier plays. Sam is isolated and he does fail to achieve the ideal relationship with any of the women, but the sense of guilt is not as apparent.
In this play, the responsibility for failure is placed, not on Sam, but on the parental image, The System and its agent, the Servocell. Sam is punished for daring to disobey the parental authority and in this sense the play is based on purgation and damnation rather than purgation and redemption. Sam is guilty of disobeying and his punishment is death.

Double Solitaire, like Solitaire, differs from the earlier plays in that there is no clear suggestion of a redemptive act at the end. Charley is isolated from the maternal figure and he feels guilty for failing to achieve the ideal relationship, but purgation and redemption do not follow in this play. Barbara's gesture of touching Charley's head may be interpreted as compassion, but it is a far cry from Laura's obvious sexual gesture at the end of Tea and Sympathy. The ritual is left incomplete and there is reason to believe that Barbara will not willingly participate in it anymore.

The central structure in all of Anderson's plays is a sexual ritual of rebirth. The man is isolated and turns to the woman for contact through sexual activity. Through the intensity of sexual intercourse, he is reborn to a new sense of life. He becomes virile, potent, and masculine. All are symbols of life for him. Through the ritual he triumphs over death by conceiving children, a sign of immortality.
Minor rituals occur frequently and are repetitive activities that are designed to create a sense of control over events and persons. All are used to create an emotion or response paralleling that of sexual activity. Eating or nourishing is a life-giving act just as sex is. When Laura offers Tom something to eat, or Barbara in The Days Between prepares food for Ted, they are performing a ritual in lieu of but with the same function as sexual activity.

Returning to a place of previous happiness is a minor ritual designed to lead into the primary ritual of sex. When Charley takes Barbara to a beach similar to one they visited when young, he is creating an environment which he hopes will lead to sexual activity.

Special days and celebrations are minor rituals in that they are times for repeating predetermined actions in an attempt to recreate a remembered emotion or response. Anniversaries, birthdays, Father's Day, Christmas, et cetera, all call for ritualized activities.

The giving of gifts and flowers are minor rituals as is the showing of the film and slides. While the objects themselves are symbols the use of these symbols in a repetitive way to create an emotional response is ritualistic.

The ritual structure of the plays reveals much about the nature of women. They are the essential element in the ritual and as a result have tremendous power. This power makes the man
both worship and fear them. They are the agents for action within
the ritual and the man is dependent on them. Women who become
actively involved in the ritual are positive characters. Those
who refuse are negative to some degree. Laura is the ideal woman
since she initiates the ritual and carries it through to completion.
No other woman so completely fulfills the ritual role.

Imagery

The second element in the plays which reveals the nature of
women is that of verbal imagery and its correlative symbolism. The
dominant imagery throughout the plays is that of death. It appears
in such concepts as suicide, killing, rape, isolation, freezing, suffo­
ccation and others. Death is the ultimate enemy for Anderson's men
because it is a cessation of all feeling. For this reason the men
fear old age. As John tells Katherine, "I'm forty and I have intimations of mortality." (12)

Suicide is a form of death that results from the loss of sexual
activity. In Tea and Sympathy, Tom fails to achieve sexual contact
with Ellie and attempts suicide. In Silent Night, Lonely Night,
Katherine's sexual relationship with her husband is threatened by his
affairs and she contemplates suicide. In Solitaire, the loss of sexual
contact as a life-giving ritual contributes to Sam's decision to commit
suicide. Sylvia, in Double Solitaire, says she can always commit sui­
cide when her lovers are no longer around.
Many images have symbolic value in that they convey more than one meaning. Flowers are clearly linked to the image of women. They often stand for the woman's perfection in the man's eyes. In *The Days Between* and *Double Solitaire*, young husbands present flowers to their wives who are the ideal woman; young and sexually responsive. But flowers may also suggest the counter image of women, death, as they do with Lilly in *Tea and Sympathy*, Meg in *The Days Between*, and Margaret in *I Never Sang For My Father*.

Gifts are important symbols and frequently reflect the image of the woman who gives them or the one to whom they are given. In *Tea and Sympathy*, the book of poetry Tom gives Laura expresses his love for her. The money John gives Katherine in *Silent Night, Lonely Night* suggests the whore image. Her gift to him, her handkerchief, is a gesture of compassion. In *The Days Between*, Ted wants to give Barbara a piece of jewelry that had belonged to Meg when she was very young. It signals Ted's desire for Barbara to become the young Meg for him.

In *Solitaire* and *Double Solitaire*, the gifts, like other elements in the plays, are ineffective and a mockery of the gestures in the early works. In *Solitaire*, the gifts are literally empty boxes and in *Double Solitaire* Charley's gifts on the plane have a negative effect on Barbara.

The film that Peter shows his father in *Double Solitaire*, like the slides that are projected, is a symbol of the ideal relationship. In both, the man and woman are frozen in time at the most perfect moment in their relationship. They never grow old, and the intensity of their
passion never fades. The woman is always sexually responsive and life-giving. It is a fantasy world where reality does not intrude. Both the film and slides project the image of the perfect woman.

Dramatic Alignment

As we trace the dramatic alignment in the plays, we can see the image of women evolve. The dramatic alignment is defined by Burke as "what vs what." In all of the plays, the basic conflict is between life and death. The man struggles to escape death through the life-giving ritual of sex. Women appear as images of both life and death and we must look at the basic conflicts to determine how their image develops.

There are five subclasses of dramatic alignment within the major conflict. They are: ritual vs feeling; romanticism vs realism, past vs present; intensity of young love vs mature love; and physical contact vs verbal communication.

The conflict between ritual and feeling is based on the man's need to create emotion through ritual while the woman must have emotion precede ritual. The man's view is seen clearly in the speeches by Mr. Potter and Charley, but these ideas are present in every major male character.

For the women the feeling must come first in order for the ritual to be effective. This is why Katherine, in Silent Night, Lonely Night does not respond to John's needs immediately. She must have time for
some emotional response to develop. However, the ritual does not make John love her, Katherine; it makes him love the woman she becomes, Jennifer. Katherine ceases to exist in the ritual and is Jennifer for the time she is involved with John. This is why he calls her by Jennifer's name.

In *Tea and Sympathy*, Laura feels the need for love to precede sex. She justifies Tom's failure with Ellie because he did not feel any love for her. At the end of the play, Laura can give herself to Tom knowing he does feel love for her, Laura.

The woman who participates in sex without love is in danger of becoming a whore. Women such as Ellie in *Tea and Sympathy* and The Madam and Wife in *Solitaire* are clearly whores since they perform for money. Women such as Norma in *I Never Sang For My Father* and Sylvia in *Double Solitaire* are linked to the whore image because they relinquish their identities for the man without asking for any emotional commitment in return. Women such as Katherine in *Silent Night, Lonely Night*, Barbara in *The Days Between*, and Barbara in *Double Solitaire* fear they will become whores. The fear arises from their awareness of loss of identity. Women who become surrogates and relinquish their uniqueness are merely objects in the ritual and are not valued in and of themselves. This loss of identity is the sign of the whore image.

The only woman who has no tinge of the whore, except the clearly maternal women such as Margaret Garrison and Mrs. Potter, is Laura. Since she is Tom's first sexual partner, he has no one for her to
replace. There is no need for her to be a surrogate since she is the initial woman in his life. Laura is the ideal and in this sense, every woman who follows is a surrogate for her.

The conflict between ritual and feeling is never resolved, but it colors the image of the female characters. Because the men are always central to the action, we tend to identify more closely with them. There is no play in which the woman is the character undergoing the ritual of death, purgation and redemption. It is always the man, therefore, when the woman refuses to participate in the ritual or distorts it in some way, we react negatively toward her. In spite of the insight into Barbara's character in Double Solitaire, there is a negative connotation to her character because she refuses to provide the life-giving ritual Charley so obviously needs.

In the second dramatic alignment, romanticism vs realism, women also have a negative image. Anderson's men are the dreamers who catch our fancy and arouse our sympathy while his women point out the "mosquitoes." Laura is the only romantic woman in any of the plays. Never again is there a central female character who is willing to be free, to dream, to "soar." Beginning with the reluctant Katherine in Silent Night, Lonely Night, it is a steady descent into reality as we move from one female character to the next. No amount of insight can change the fact that Barbara is a realist in Double Solitaire, and as such she cannot and will not participate in Charley's dream.
The third dramatic alignment is between past and present and is closely linked with the previous conflict. Men see the past as the perfect time when their relationships were ideal. They seek to regain this lost experience. The past is youth and virility while the future represents old age and death. In Silent Night, Lonely Night, John says of Philip: "... he saw in me the terrible future and I saw in him the lovely past." (21)

The men fear and reject change because it signifies the loss of the perfection they hoped for. Change is the "inevitable" against which they war. The frozen images of the film and slides represent the ideal ritual for the men because they capture the moment of greatest value and do not allow it to diminish.

For the woman, change is an accepted fact of life. Time passes; people change or life becomes a fantasy, a charade. As Barbara tells Charley in the last play:

Barbara: I don't know. I guess I'm unconsciously trying to flag you down. To shout, "Hey, Charley, it's me. Barbara. Age forty-two. Not your girl. You scared me because I knew I couldn't be your girl... your bride. All brides die, Charley... I felt it was fantasy time. Charades. (82)

She's right, of course; but we, like Charley, don't want to be reminded and we resent her for it. Alice is also right in I Never Sang For My Father, but she is cruel and negative. Edith is right in I'll Be Home For Christmas, but we sympathize with Chuck. Even Harriet has a point in The Footsteps of Doves, but we feel she gets what she deserves when George smiles at Jill.
Anderson's women are unfeeling and insensitive in their practicality and it is this more often than their ideas that puts us off. Once we move away from Laura so few of the women are soft, warm, and compassionate. They insist on living in the present, and then they make the present cold and unbearable for the man.

The fourth dramatic alignment is between the man's need for the intense passion of young love and the woman's desire for a mature love. The term "mature" is not used as a value judgment, but as a descriptive term for a less intense physical relationship.

Charley tells George he wants a woman; "... about whom I could feel and continue to feel with such intensity that my whole life would take on meaning ... " (53) Anderson's men must feel with such intensity in order to reassure themselves that they are alive. "Blandness" is death. Charley tells Peter that he has known what it is to love intensely; "A woman should be adored or abandoned." (66) There is no middle ground. Like David in _The Days Between_ they cannot live the everyday life, they must have the days of glory. Life must be a constant "high" or they become frightened and threatened by non-feeling and death.

In _I Never Sang For My Father_, Gene is concerned primarily with what he does not feel. Because he does not have an immediate and overpowering sense of love for his father, he feels he has failed and the relationship is meaningless. Charley feels much the same way about his relationship with Barbara.
Charley: By realizing I don't feel the way I should to stand up there with deep commitment and conviction, I suddenly got a terrible sense of the absence of that feeling . . . in my life. And I was, and am, scared to death. (51-52)

This same intensity is a burden to the woman. As Mrs. Potter says; "I would have found it a great strain to have someone that devoted." (38)

Barbara tells Charley:

Barbara: I envy you your longing to be in love, intensely, adoringly. I don't seem to feel that need, and I can't respond to it. It makes me feel ridiculous. Grotesque . . . (80)

In response to her feelings of ridiculousness and grotesqueness, the woman withdraws from physical contact. It is this, not the menopause, that causes women to refuse sexual activity. But their action, no matter how understandable from their point of view, is a negative aspect of their relationship with the man. She denies the man the essential life-giving ritual of sex; and, except in the case of Barbara in Double Solitaire, her motivation for this refusal is never made clear. Since we cannot understand why they refuse the man his needed ritual, we must react negatively to the woman. It is not until the last play that we begin to understand that the woman withdraws from sexual activity because it depersonalizes her and turns her into a "whore with a stranger." (78) In retrospect we can see this in the underlying motivation for many of the women in earlier plays, but within the context of those plays, the motivation is not clear and thus the woman has a negative connotation.
Unfortunately, none of the men realize what the woman is feeling. Charley does not hear Barbara. He continues to struggle through the physical ritual. When Barbara asks "Why?" he answers "Because I want to." (82) Like a child, Charley can be concerned only with his own needs and desires. He cannot understand Barbara's attitude. He must continue to seek the sexual ritual whether Barbara is willing to participate or not.

The final dramatic alignment is between the man's need for physical contact and the woman's need to verbalize her feelings. The need for touching is evident in many of the earlier works. John tells Katherine:

John: I couldn't ask a woman what I really wanted . . . "Come home and be with me all night. Just let me hold you all night." What I wanted was to hold someone. (57)

When Barbara tries to pull away from Charley, he tells her:

Charley: I want to hold you, for God's sake! Let me touch you. I just want to hold you! (The tone shocks her. Is this what he has been talking about? His instinctive need for physical intimacy and communication through bodies) (80)

Barbara expresses the woman's need for verbalization. She has asked Charley never to stop talking to her, but he has stopped. The verbalization is as essential to her as the touching is to him. She tells him that she has seen him with another woman and thought:

Barbara: "I wish he'd go to bed with her and talk to me." (Saddened by this, Charley moves again to hold her.) No, please. I want to talk. (79)

Charley's instinctive response to the situation is physical. When Barbara insists that they talk, he refuses and she asks: "Are you afraid that if you talked it would be too awful?" (83) Verbalization
reveals ones inner emotions and desires, and Anderson's men do not wish to reveal themselves, they wish only to feel.

As with the other dramatic conflicts this one remains unresolved and unsolvable. As long as Charlie refuses to hear what she is saying, as long as he refuses to see her as an individual with needs as great as his, they will not be able to communicate on either level. Barbara will be locked into the interdependent relationship and her role as sexual partner. Her gesture of touching Charley's head at the end of the play has more resignation in it than compassion.

We have looked at the three major elements within the plays; structure, imagery and dramatic alignment. We have said that the image of woman is revealed through these elements. Now we can determine what the images are and how they develop through the progression of plays.

The Earth Mother

The dominant image of women throughout Anderson's work is as the earth mother. The most positive women are those who project the maternal qualities of compassion, comfort, and protection and who provide a re-birth through sexual activity. The more maternal the qualities of the woman, the more positive her image. The most maternal character, and thus the most positive is Laura. In Tea and Sympathy we find not only the ideal woman but the pattern for the perfect ritual.

It is important to note that the male characters do not change and develop from one play to another to the extent that the women do. The primary difference between Tom and the men in the later plays is numerical age. All of the male characters are adolescent emotionally. They
are immature; seeking a maternal figure who will protect them from
the harshness of life, who will bear the responsibility for making
them happy, and who will ensure their sexual dominance over the
father figure. They have many qualities characteristic of children.
They abdicate responsibility, live in a world of dreams, are self-
centered and concerned primarily with their own immediate needs.
They are inclined toward non-verbal communication and need the re-
assurance of physical contact. Because the men do not change, and
because they continue to have exactly the same basic needs, they look
for the earth mother image in all of the women. Laura is the perfect
woman because she responds to the child/man by protecting him, de-
feating the father, and providing a rebirth through sexual activity.

Unfortunately for the men the women in Anderson's plays do not
remain the same. They slowly move away from the perfect earth-mother
image, and as they do, they become more complex. Laura is not a very
realistic character in terms of human motivation. The logic of her
characterization is faulty because she is primarily an element in the
ritual, not a unique human being. As the plays progress and the women
withdraw further from their ritualistic role, they become more unique
and human. The women in the plays mature and change in that they
accept reality and responsibilities. However, as the earth mother,
they accept and foster the man's adolescent behavior. Barbara, in
_double solitaire_ is one of the few women who refuses to approve of
the man's adolescent need for intense physical passion and her
gesture at the end of the play suggests that even she has resigned herself to her child/husband.

The Terrible Mother

The shadow side of the earth mother is always present even in a woman as perfect as Laura. Because women have the power to bestow life through sex, they must also have the power to destroy life by denying sex. This power is suggested in Laura's statement that only a woman can determine who is a man. Her threat to Al and her destruction of Bill all reveal the shadow side of the earth mother image.

Barbara, in The Days Between, is the most clearly drawn image of the terrible mother. She destroys David and reduces him to the level of a child in order to preserve her identity as the maternal woman. She is a frightening projection of the power of the woman to kill and castrate. This aspect of the maternal figure is necessary, however. If the child/man is to become sexually dominant, the father must be defeated. The ideal woman performs this act for the son in the role of the terrible mother. When he becomes a father, however, he is then threatened with being defeated himself. One reason the men wish to remain childlike is they can then avoid the role of the mature man who is constantly threatened by the terrible mother. The men fear growing old because it moves them into the role of father and they are then in danger of being defeated by the woman acting the ritual role for their son. This explains much of the tension that exists between all of the fathers and sons in the plays.
As the plays progress, the shadow side of the woman's nature emerges. None is as clearly placed in this role as Barbara in *The Days Between*, but their withdrawal from sexual activity is a constant reminder of the power of the terrible mother.

**The Madonna**

Several women who project the earth mother qualities of compassion and comfort are removed from sexual activity by death. They assume the image of the madonna. The man can worship the woman without fear because she no longer has the power of life and death through sex.

Guilt is often associated with such women because the man feels, and often is, responsible for her death. Jennifer has been driven to her living death of insanity by John's infidelity; Meg's frozen smile of hate causes Ted to feel guilty; and Gene's intention to move to California and remarry is to some extent responsible for Margaret's death.

Laura also has some of the characteristics of the madonna if we project past the final curtain. Once she has made the sexual sacrifice for Tom, she intends to leave the school and thus disappear from his life. She will have died symbolically and Tom will be able to worship her memory. He will also feel some guilt for having been the cause of her leaving the school and abandoning her previous life.

The madonna figure allows the man to feel the intensity of adoration but does not provide physical contact. He must seek a surrogate who is willing to assume the identity of the dead wife in the
performance of the ritual. Katherine becomes Jennifer; Ted wants Barbara to become Meg; Norma has become Carol. In Solitaire, the Wife is a parody of the surrogate and she is devoid of any of the compassion and comfort associated with Florence, the woman whose image she must assume.

The Whore

We have seen that the earth mother image without sexual connotations becomes the madonna. Conversely, the earth mother image reduced to only the sexual connotations becomes the whore. As long as sexual activity is prompted by maternal compassion and concern, it is acceptable. However, sexual activity devoid of these qualities and based only on desire or physical needs is negative, and the women who are involved in such activity are seen as the whore image.

This image is complex in that it is projected both as the man sees it and as the woman sees it. The man sees the whore as the sexual woman who does not offer compassion and comfort. The woman sees the whore as one who has lost her identity. Women such as Ellie and the Madam have no identity except as objects of sexual contact, and as a result they clearly project the whore image. Women such as Sylvia, in Double Solitaire, are only slightly above the whore because they show only a minimum of concern for the men in their lives. Norma in I Never Sang For My Father and Katherine in Silent Night, Lonely Night are slightly higher on the scale because they show compassion and they limit their sexual attention to one man rather than several. As the women move up toward the earth mother image, they are in less danger of becoming the whore. The
woman's image depends ultimately on her willingness to assume the earth mother role. Thus, Barbara in Double Solitaire, in refusing the role of earth mother comes to feel that she is a "whore with a stranger."

The Soul-Mate

The final archetypal image that appears in the plays is that of the soul-mate, the woman who completes the man's sense of self. This is the image men seek in young, sexually willing women such as Jill in The Footsteps of Doves and Melinda in Double Solitaire. The soul-mate is less obviously maternal than the earth mother. Since Anderson's men remain emotionally adolescent, they can find the soul-mate figure only in very young women or in the memories they have of their wives when young.

Very few women in the plays fulfill this image and those that do are only briefly drawn. The reason is that this image is very fleeting in Anderson's plays. The soul-mate inevitably becomes the earth mother/terrible mother as time passes. Janet, in Silent Night, Lonely Night is beginning to assume the role of the terrible mother in her insensitivity to Philip's career and her practical approach to life. in general. Jill is the soul-mate for the moment, but she to will age and move beyond the young sexual image. Women such as the two Barbara's have been the soul-mate at one time, but they have now become the terrible mother. The soul-mate may be the man's "inspiration" in youth, but she cannot remain young forever. The bride inevitably becomes a wife. As Barbara says in Double Solitaire; "all brides die."
We see in Anderson's plays a penetrating analysis of the male-female relationship. As he describes it, it is mutually dependent and often very restrictive for the persons involved. Both the men and women rely on the partner to give them identity and a sense of life. They see one another as the "condition" of their life and as the one who gives their life meaning. Without one another they are "nothing." Separation from the partner becomes a form of death.

While the men remain adolescent emotionally, seeking either a maternal figure in the woman or a young, sexual partner, the women change and mature. This change in the woman's character results in a shifting of the balance in the male-female relationship and the men see this shift as threatening. They must insist on the continuation of the ritual of sexual contact in order to insure the woman's role in their life. The women are equally as dependent since they are given a sense of identity in their role as earth mother and they rely on the man's need for them to insure this role.

The men are the central characters in the plays and express their views more completely than the women. We tend to identify more closely with the men who are central to the ritual structure of purgation and redemption. Because the women often interfere with or refuse to participate fully in this ritual, we see them as somewhat negative characters. The women are realists and we favor the romantic men.
In these plays, however, Anderson draws men and women who are neither wholly good or bad, but are complex characters involved in complex relationships. The value of Anderson's work is that he is able to go beyond the specific characters and relationships he deals with to show us a deeper and more meaningful theme. He is concerned not so much with modern-day marriages, but the whole question of how men and women relate to one another at a subconscious level. For far too long he has been considered the author of modern "problem" plays that bordered on "soap-opera." The true depth of Anderson's work has been neglected and overlooked. But his work is of major importance not because he deals with current social problems, but because he deals with the deep, hidden motives and emotions that have beset men and women for generations. Anderson has touched a nerve that goes beyond our social conflicts. It reaches to the very depths of the subconscious mind.
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