3. "Make Up Your Mind": Boss Ladies and Enchantresses in the 1940s Broadway Musical

Described by *Time Magazine* as "a psychoanalytic circus with four revolving rings," *Lady in the Dark* was not a Cinderella musical, nor its stricken lady of the title a typical rags-to-riches heroine. Yet the Cinderella mythology strongly pervades the 1941 Freudian fairy tale, with its "sphere of gorgeously bedizened make-believe."[1] In the milestone musical play, with music by Kurt Weill, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and a book and concept by Moss Hart, Gertrude Lawrence played *Allure* magazine editor Liza Elliot. An accomplished career woman, Liza finds herself "going to pieces" in the throes of a nervous breakdown, which she seeks to remedy through psychoanalytic sessions with Dr. Brooks.[2]

In the "Circus Dream," the last of three dream fantasies invoked through Dr. Brooks' treatment, the "austere" Liza imagines a Ringmaster taunting her: "Liza Elliott cannot decide who she wants to be—the executive or the enchantress."[3] In her final session with Dr. Brooks, Liza relives painful childhood memories that confirm her decision to exchange the power of the executive for the glamour of the enchantress, and to embrace romantic and professional submission to advertising editor Charley Johnson. In one of these memories, Liza recalls being selected to play the princess in a "little musical Cinderella play," only to sobbingly turn down the role when the boy cast as the prince complains, "Why can't we have a pretty princess... A princess ought to be beautiful, oughtn't she?"[4] Taunted for her lack of beauty as a child and "afraid to compete as a woman," Liza, in Moss Hart's psychoanalytic terms, had sublimated her femininity into professional ambition. She had become—as described by Charley—a strident "Boss Lady": both a dramatic transformation of the 1920s Cinderella working girl and a career-driven maturation of the 1930s broad.

Lady in the Dark's psychoanalytic salvos against the modern career woman would be dodged and deflected for a number of years under the exigencies of American's entry into World War II, when government and media propaganda enlisted millions of women to don the uniform of Rosie the Riveter.[5] Nevertheless, *Lady in the Dark* anticipated the themes and conflicts that immersed the 1940s Broadway musical stage. The wartime era abounded in "battle of the sexes" musicals, including *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), while many of the postwar musicals assumed themes of "taming the shrew," most famously the Shakespeare-inspired *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948).

The postwar musicals increasingly reflected a climate in which men—many of them soldiers returning from the European front—resented the "Boss Lady" and her ascendance in the work force and insisted on the restoration of traditional domestic roles. While musicals such as *Something for the Boys* and *One Touch of Venus* (both 1943), as well as *On the Town* and *Bloomer Girl* (both 1944) ebulliently celebrated women's wartime independence and often espoused feminist ideals, many shows focused on the necessity of its heroine to, in the words of Kaye's Ringmaster, "decide who she wants to be"—masculine or feminine, powerful or glamorous. In the Circus Dream, the Ringmaster announces Liza as the star attraction: "the captivating and tantalizing Liza Elliott: The Woman Who Cannot Make Up Her Mind!"[6]

This state of feminine indecision—drawing upon what *Life Magazine*, in 1947, called "the American Woman's Dilemma"[7]—stands at the crux of a myriad of 1940s Broadway musicals, and underlies many films of the same era. As Jeanine Basinger has observed of the 1944 movie musical *Cover Girl*, about its fashion-world Cinderella's (Rita Hayworth) own conflict between professional power and marriage, "She is forced to confront the traditional woman's problem. She must make a Choice."[8] The heroine's urgent need to make the Choice—to "make up her mind"—surges through many of the decade's shows: from "The Saga of Jenny" in *Lady in the Dark* and the legendary "Laurey Makes Up Her Mind" dream ballet of *Oklahoma!*, to the 1948 Kurt Weill–Alan Jay Lerner time-traveling "musical vaudeville" *Love Life*. In the latter musical, housewife-turned-career woman Susan Cooper begins the show in a magician's act, with her husband Sam suspended on a tightrope in the air, and Susan literally and metaphorically sawed in half: "Well, this is what I really am, isn't it? Split in two and severed in the middle? I'm half homemaker, half breadwinner; half mother, half provider; I'm over there a woman and up here a man."[9]

The theme was not unique to the 1940s musical, and in fact, a satiric 1922 musical comedy called *The Clinging Vine* anticipated *Lady in the Dark* by almost two decades. Featuring an original book and lyrics by Zelda Sears, and music by Harold Levey, *The Clinging Vine* follows Antoinette Allen, a paint company executive who muses, "It's very difficult to be business-like and lady-like at the same time."[10] During Antoinette's stay in Connecticut, her "flapper grandma" instructs the plainly dressed young businesswoman to put on frilly pink dresses, and to feign the role of an obsequious feminine charmer, in order to win the heart of her "Prince Charming," a feckless eggbeater inventor named Jimmy Manning, who "doesn't like clever women."[11] As Mrs. Allen informs Antoinette, a woman only needs three phrases to please a man: "yes," "no," and "do go on."[12] In Sears' sly send-up of clinging-vine femininity, Antoinette eventually makes a compromise: she wins Jimmy with a more glamorous makeover, but also convinces him to accept her (mostly) on her own terms: "a sensible, practical business woman who'd know how to manage you and your invention."[13]

Yet the "the difficulty of being businesslike and ladylike at the same time" consumes the Broadway musical of the 1940s more so than any other decade, despite its sparkling 1922 precedent by Zelda Sears. It is no coincidence that many of the era's Boss Lady musicals were created, in part, by women, including choreographer and director Agnes de Mille, producer Cheryl Crawford, and musical arranger and composer Trude Rittmann.[14] The 1940s welcomed the lyrical contributions of not only Dorothy Fields (whose 1945 show *Up in Central Park* anticipates *Annie Get Your Gun* in its love vs. career themes), but Betty Comden, who, as the partner of Adolph Green, glorified the World War II–era working woman in 1944's *On the Town*. Female bookwriters also generated two of the era's most subversively feminist musicals—*Kiss Me, Kate* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1949).

While the female lyricists and librettists of the 1940s, including Fields, Comden, Bella Spewack, and Anita Loos, worked primarily in the carnivalesque mode of musical comedy, the brilliant and versatile de Mille helped Rodgers and Hammerstein galvanize their "revolution" of integrated musical plays. De Mille dominated the era with three shows running on Broadway at once: *Oklahoma!*, *Bloomer Girl*, and *One Touch of Venus*, inspiring dance critic John Martin to dub the mid-1940s the "de Millenium."[15] As Ethan Mordden notes of the *Oklahoma!* revolution's impact on musical comedy, "The musical play now holds the power, and it will draw many—not all—writers into its aura."[16]

The formally integrated musical play transformed the artistic landscape of the Broadway musical. While some shows held out as "musical comedy through and through" (such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*),[17] others absorbed the nostalgic Americana and serious moral purpose of the musical play (such as *Bloomer Girl* and *Up in Central Park*). Meanwhile, other musicals stood out as fascinating, volatile fusions of both forms (i.e., *On the Town, Annie Get Your Gun,* and *Kiss Me, Kate*). In 1948, *Time Magazine* profiled Oscar Hammerstein II soon after the opening of the experimental Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Allegro,* both directed and choreographed by de Mille:

> But *Allegro,* with all its faults, is an impressive effort in a good cause: it is the latest sortie in that well-nigh-won revolution against cloak-and-daguerreotype operetta and June-moon musicomedy. In that revolution, Oscar Hammerstein is certainly one of the heroes. He put something like real people into *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel;* but *Allegro* is by far the most realistic of his librettos, by far the most deliberate manifestation of the New Look he gave to musical plays.[18]

The ascent of the formally and narratively integrated musical play, however, coincided not only with wartime nostalgia, but also with the rise of domestic sentiment. This sense of conservatism swelled in the midst of World War II and consumed American culture upon the war's closure, even as Christian Dior's "New Look"—minted in *Allegro*'s year of 1947—confined the waistlines of American women. Rodgers and Hammerstein's model of the musical play created not only a series of masterpieces, but an indelible gallery of rich, detailed, and exuberant female characters (enhanced in *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* through the choreography of de Mille). At the same time, the new model paralleled sociological rhetoric about the American home, and women's place within it: "whatever (woman) did in the past was integrated around the home, in one location, and with one single line of direction. On this total integration her status depended. Now she has no certainty of status, is neither one thing nor another, for there is no integration of her activities," wrote psychoanalysts Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg in their influential 1947 jeremiad, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (the ideas of which supplied substantial fuel to "the Feminine Mystique," as Betty Friedan would term the phenomenon in 1963).[19]

At the same time that *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* gained cultural traction, many American women were fired from their jobs, demoted to lower-paying occupations, and pressured by the combined forces of

government, media, and Hollywood to return to domestic conformity amid the expanding lawns of suburbia; to shore up the home in the atomic "Age of Anxiety." As Richard Lingeman recounts, "Within a year of VJ Day, some 2 million women had left their jobs permanently (including many who had been fired)... the number of women employed in 1946 equaled that in the war years, but 90 percent had taken a pay cut. Overall, the average weekly pay of all working women fell by 26 percent."[20]

Numerous postwar musicals reinforced these themes of women's domestication. *Miss Liberty* (1948), with a score by Irving Berlin and a book by Robert E. Sherwood, featured the character Maisie Dell, a brash "feminine scribe."[21] Enamored of her fellow journalist Horace, Maisie performs "Homework," which one critic described as a "catchy item in protest against her lauded self sufficiency as a reporter for *The Police Gazette.*"[22] Maisie laments:

> Homework,
> I wanna do homework.
> Instead of an office,
> I wanna work home,
> Staying at home and crocheting
> And meekly obeying
> The guy who comes home.[23]

The taming of musicals' heroines paralleled the "reforming" of musical comedy:

> The postwar "integrated" musical... in reaction against the unprecedented economic mobility of women during the Depression and WWII... engineered an increased emphasis on the production of male interiority (viz. the "Soliloquy" in *Carousel*) and endeavored to reassure audiences that an independent-minded, unruly, or shrewish heroine would be tamed by the final curtain,

as David Savran observes.[24]

The mass popularity of Freudianism in America also underlay both the movements toward domestic integration and the taming impulses of the integrated musical play, as postwar psychoanalysts sought to "bring about a comprehensive social harmony."[25] Psychoanalysis had been accepted as gospel by many American intellectuals and bohemians since the World War I era. Yet after World War II, "masses of Americans jumped on the Freudian bandwagon."[26] Hollywood—the destination for dozens

of émigré psychoanalysts and protégés of Freud—became a central outpost for Freudianism, as adapted and assimilated through mainstream American culture. The cinema, too, became a fountainhead of Freudian thought, expressed in the dream symbolism in Hollywood classics like the Hitchcock–Dalí collaboration *Spellbound* (1945), as well as surrealist experimental films like Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), the sexually menacing dream visions of which appeared the same year that Laurey "made up her mind" between Curley and Jud in *Oklahoma!*.

In its turn away from vaudevillian archetype, and toward dimensions of psychological character, the 1940s Broadway musical deeply absorbed the ideas of Freud, who even appeared as a character himself in Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's 1945 musical *The Day Before Spring*.[27] While the creators of *Lady in the Dark* led the way in "popularizing psychoanalysis to a musical comedy public" with the surreal spectacle of *Lady in the Dark*, Rodgers and Hammerstein (expanding upon the playful Freudianism of Rodgers and Hart's *Peggy-Ann*) followed Weill, Gershwin, and Hart's innovations in the creation of what W. David Sievers called "psychological music-drama."[28] As Sievers noted in his *Freud on Broadway*: "When Rodgers and Hammerstein were brought together to adapt Lynn Riggs's play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, a revolution in musical theatre occurred, and the new American music-drama based upon the psychology of mental health was born."[29]

While the George Abbott-style musical comedy continued to exult in brassy divas, throwing off inhibitions while belting assertive showstoppers, the musical play became synonymous—starting with *Oklahoma!*—with the convention of the dream ballet. The dream ballet often used dance to dramatize characters' erotic repressions and psychosexual angst, as well as larger mental crises. In the three and a half years after *Oklahoma!* opened, no less than 46 Broadway musicals included ballets, with 21 of them including dream sequences.[30]

Thematically, too, Freudianism informs the era's numerous Boss Lady musicals, and the heated battles-of-the-sexes of such couples as Liza Elliott and Charley Johnson (in *Lady in the Dark*), Annie Oakley and Frank Butler (in *Annie Get Your Gun*), Lilli Vanessi and Fred Graham (in *Kiss Me, Kate*), and Susan and Sam Cooper (in *Love Life*). As forces of sexual liberation in the 1920s and '30s, feminism and Freud had aligned as "unlikely bedfellows of Modernism."[31] By contrast, in the 1940s, Freudianism transformed into a branch called "ego psychology," which shifted the emphasis of psychoanalysis from a "theory of sexuality (to) one of sex roles."[32] Ego psychology stressed drives of aggression: as Charley Johnson taunts Liza in *Lady in the Dark*, "Rage is a pretty good substitute for sex, isn't it?"[33] According to Mari Jo Buhle, "Not until the Freudian revival of the 1940s and the rise of ego psychology did a rampant misogyny and virulent antifeminism overtake the scholarly discipline and root themselves firmly in the popular emendation."[34]

While World War II–era Broadway musicals would incorporate, and often refute, the tenets of ego psychology, this Freudian discipline was even more prevalent in Hollywood. Here, the progression from an ambivalent celebration of the working woman (within the pragmatic context of wartime industry), to her caricature as a Boss Lady spinster with a "masculinity complex," magnified the conflicts of the Broadway musical while illustrating how attitudes toward ambitious and professional women shifted between the early 1940s and the postwar era.

WORLD WAR II, ROSIE THE RIVETER, AND THE BOSS LADY FILMS OF THE 1940S

From the start of World War II to the postwar years, Hollywood flooded the cinematic market with a myriad of films that explored the role of women in the work force and considered the complexities of the "American Woman's Dilemma." While career women became central figures in an array of World War II–era classics, including the film noirs *Laura* (1944) and *Mildred Pierce* (1945), a sequence of Boss Lady films proliferated during these years, with such stars as Barbara Stanwyck and Ginger Rogers, who starred as Liza in the 1944 film adaptation of *Lady in the Dark*.[35] A subgenre of the woman's film, most frequently framed as romantic comedies, almost all of the Boss Lady movies involve some variant of the heroine's compromising her professional ambitions to conform as a more feminine mate for her love interest.

Yet while the Boss Lady comedies of the early 1940s often express ambivalent attitudes about women in the workplace, they nevertheless celebrate the independence of Rosie the Riveter and allow their heroines some measure of autonomy, as balanced with love and marriage. In one of the definitive Boss Lady films, 1942's *Woman of the Year*, Katharine Hepburn plays the brilliant political columnist Tess Harding, "the number two dame in the country, next to Mrs. Roosevelt."[36] Tess enters into a passionate and loving marriage with sports columnist Sam Craig (Spencer Tracy) only to tax his patience with her hectic work schedule and constantly threaten his masculine ego: "The Outstanding Woman of the Year isn't a woman

at all," Sam seethes.[37] Though Tess swears to Sam she'll "give up her job," and creates a kitchen debacle using "Gibson's Housewife's Cook Book," Sam entreats his extraordinary wife to compromise, not surrender: "I don't want to be married to Tess Harding any more than I want you to be just Mrs. Sam Craig. Why can't you be Tess Harding-Craig?"[38]

By contrast, the Boss Lady films of the postwar years, jaundiced by the spread of ego psychology, function less as balanced portrayals of marital compromise than antagonist sexual battles of male wills to power. Such films "took on nasty, antifeminine overtones," while reflecting the resentments of American men, including many returning veterans.[39] In a *New York Times* article by Victor Dallaire, titled "The American Woman? Not for This GI," Dallaire lamented America as a land of "business Amazons" who "seem to have lost more than they have gained in their struggle for equality."[40] The cinema reflected the misogynistic backlash: "A poll of working women taken during the war came up with the startling fact that 80 percent wanted to keep their jobs after it was over.... This, of course, is the source of the tremendous tension in films of the time, which tried, by ridicule, intimidation, or persuasion, to get women out of the office and back to the home," as Molly Haskell observes.[41]

The 1948 Warner Brothers romantic comedy *June Bride* renders these themes painfully explicit. *June Bride* follows Linda Gilman (Bette Davis), the tough "Madam Editor" of *Home Life Magazine*. Unlike *Lady in the Dark*'s Liza, Linda begins the film in a state of both professional and sexual bravado, informing her one-time lover and *Home Life* employee Carey Jackson (Robert Montgomery): "I'm successful. I have a certain...stature in my work. A considerable amount of money in the bank, and I do pretty well as I please for male companionship."[42] While Carey, an international journalist, hopes to reignite his romance with his female boss, he is unwilling to defer to a career woman, and Linda equally loath to submit to a husband: "I guess I'd look pretty silly...following you all over Europe, carrying the suitcases," she tells him. Only after embarking together to suburban Indiana, to create *Home Life*'s new "June Bride" issue, does Linda risk permanently losing Carey. She decides to give up her career in favor of marriage: "I'm...tired of being a brick wall covered with roses. From now on, it's lavender and old lace for Linda Gilman."[43] Undermining Davis's powerful star turn, in the role of a witty and self-assured career woman, *June Bride* ends with Linda carrying Carey's suitcases to him, in a gesture of marital submission: a cinematic correlative to Kate, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, urging wives to "place your hands beneath your husband's foot" (5.2.183).[44]

The same year as *June Bride*'s premiere, Cole Porter and the Spewacks adapted *The Taming of the Shrew* into the classic 1948 backstage musical comedy *Kiss Me, Kate*. Yet whereas *Kiss Me, Kate* has approximately the same ending as the Shakespeare comedy—Lilli, as Kate, chanting "I Am Ashamed That Women are So Simple" in submission to Fred-as-Petruchio—*Kiss Me, Kate* contradicts Lilli's ostensible taming with a sophisticated framing device and layers of theatricality: Lilli is only *performing* her submission. Unburdened by the Production Code, and exulting in the assertiveness of its divas, the trajectory of the Broadway musical in the 1940s both parallels and strays from its Hollywood counterpart. Postwar musicals like *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Annie Get Your Gun* subvert their façades of taming professional women, while—in a number of Broadway musicals that opened in the midst of wartime—working women are not domesticated at all. Rather, they are ebulliently celebrated, as in the case of both *Something for the Boys* and *On the Town*.

"BUT WHAT A GENIUS IS ME": THE LIBERATED WOMEN OF WARTIME MUSICAL COMEDY

Two of Broadway's most celebrated wartime hits—1943's *Something for the Boys*, and 1944's *On the Town*—portrayed an array of female characters exuberantly and confidently occupying traditionally male jobs, in musical comedies respectively cowritten by Dorothy Fields and Betty Comden (with Adolph Green). While Ethel Merman won raves playing assembly line worker Blossom Hart in *Something for the Boys*, *On the Town* paired its three sailors on leave with a trio of dynamic and sexually liberated working women—aspiring Broadway performer and "Miss Turnstiles" Ivy Smith, anthropologist Claire de Loon, and Brunhilde "Hildy" Esterhazy, "a tough, firm, taxi driver who collects one of the sailors," as described by *The New York Times'* Lewis Nichols.[45]

Both exuberant celebrations of women's wartime enfranchisement, these musicals reflected the proliferation of factory jobs for women, their appropriation of work traditionally reserved for men, and women's presence in the armed forces. During World War II, 140,000 women joined the Women's Army Auxilary Corps (WAACs) 100,000 the Navy's WAVES, and 23,000 the Marine Corps' Women's Reserves. While women had steadily been entering the labor force since World War I, wives now joined single women as workers, and "before the war's end in August 1945, the female labor force would increase by almost 60 percent,

with married women making up three fourths of those newly entering the workforce."[46] While not as directly propagandistic, both *Something for the Boys* and *On the Town* resonated with a series of Hollywood films (often movie musicals) that served as recruitment for women into factories and military reserve forces. In the Betty Hutton musical *Here Come the Waves* (1944), a chorus comprised of hundreds of naval women marched and chanted about the jobs being done by "the gal behind the guy behind the gun." During the sequence, an elaborate film montage successively showed women working in factories, flying and putting together airplanes, in target practice, and inspecting military equipment.

Merman played a raucous Rosie the Riveter in *Something for the Boys*, which opened at the Alvin Theatre on January 7, 1943, and played a run of 422 performances. With a score by Cole Porter, and a book by Dorothy and Herbert Fields, *Something for the Boys* marked the fifth and final Merman–Porter collaboration, in an opulent production mounted by Mike Todd. The plot of *Something for the Boys* (originally titled by Dorothy Fields as *Jenny Get Your Gun*) followed three city-slicker cousins who inherit a ramshackle ranch near Kelly Field, Texas, only to convert it into a base for soldier's wives, complete with ad hoc assembly line. Meanwhile, carborundum minerals from the assembly line fall into one of Blossom Hart's (Merman) dental fillings, and convert her teeth into a military asset: a radio receiving set. Critics welcomed the riotous spectacle of *Something for the Boys* as a breezy antidote to wartime sobriety: "*Something for the Boys* takes you back to before priorities days," noted *The Boston Globe*.[47] The musical diverted audiences with its rowdy escapism and outlandish musical comedy plot: "absurd to the analytical mind but eminently suitable to the circumstances," wrote *The Wall Street Journal*'s Richard P. Cooke.[48]

Something for the Boys paraded Porter and Todd's pulchritudinous brand of patriotism, with the Merman broad once again representing red-hot-and-blue urban Americana. Merman's brassy toughness and industrial-sized belt invited "the press (to connect) the Merman voice to the factory lines.... Ads and promotion work show just how thickly the patriotism of Rosie the Riveter was being shellacked onto Merman," as Caryl Flinn notes.[49] For example, the Associated Press praised the "brassy cement-mixer quality that she uses to wallop Cole Porter's songs across the footlights" and noted that Merman "works like a steam engine on stage."[50]

Merman's brazen ingenuity in the role of Blossom Hart propelled the plot of *Something for the Boys*, where Blossom explains to her nightclub-singer cousin Chiquita: "I used to be in show business, but when we got in the war, I switched from the chorus line to the Assembly Line!"[51] The three cousins—Blossom, Chiquita (Paula Lawrence), and Harry Hart (Allen Jenkins)—draw upon Blossom's experience in a Newark factory to convert their ramshackle Texas ranch to patriotic purposes, even while Blossom pursues heartthrob bandleader Sergeant Rocky Fulton (Bill Johnson).

While Blossom's work at her assembly line wins glory for Uncle Sam, *Something for the Boys* also created a factory of feminine spectacle, if subdued by the standards of a Mike Todd production. As a stage direction indicates, "*The GIRLS are busy on the line as the traveler parts. They are wearing attractive factory overalls, stylish enough to make them cute, but not too musical comedy*."[52] In this way, *Something for the Boys* sold the commodity of Rosie the Riveter, even while giving her a potent and brazen mascot in the star performance of Ethel Merman. Opening almost four months before *Oklahoma!* (and Mike Todd's famous assessment of the Rodgers and Hammerstein show, "No gags, no girls, no chance"), *Something for the Boys* wrapped its wartime patriotism in unadulterated musical comedy: the "natural element" that Merman "seems to live and breathe in," as one critic noted.[53]

On the Town, too, stands as the quintessential New York musical comedy, as well as a show that, under the influence of *Oklahoma!,* transformed and expanded the boundaries of the genre. While *Something for the Boys* saluted the US Army, *On the Town* paired its New York City working girls with three amorous Navy sailors. With music by Leonard Bernstein, book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, direction by George Abbott, and choreography by Jerome Robbins, *On the Town* opened at the Adelphi Theatre on December 28, 1944, and ran for 462 performances.

Based on Robbins' ballet *Fancy Free, On the Town* is both a romantic fable and an antic caper. The show follows Gabey (John Battles), Chip (Cris Alexander), and Ozzie (Adolph Green) on leave for 24 hours in New York City, as the latter two help their starry-eyed friend pursue the elusive Ivy Smith (even as an ever-mounting Keystone brigade of cops chase after the gobs and their girls). *On the Town* stunned and delighted critics with its formal and stylistic eclecticism, with Robbins' dances—among them the "Times Square Ballet" and the "Coney Island Ballet"—creating terpsichorean rhapsodies of "New York, New York." As John Chapman observed in the *Daily News:*

> *On the Town* is not only the best musical of the year; it is one of the freshest, gayest, liveliest musicals I have ever seen.... Of particular merit is the Comden-Green book.... It is touched with lively and unexpected humor, with quick satire, with a welcome cutting of musical-comedy corners.[54]

Structured as a picaresque farce, *On the Town* blended elements of screwball comedy and vaudevillian cartoon. At the same time, Bernstein, Comden, and Green intended to create a musical comedy adhering to the musical play's ideals. As Comden and Green described to *The New York Times*, "We...wanted to compose a show integrating all the elements—dance, music, book, lyrics and set—into a unified whole from which New York City would emerge as protagonist."[55]

On the Town's New York City is deliriously thrumming with working women: independent and assertive, randy and rambunctious, and—despite Gabey's romantic quest for "Miss Turnstiles"—libidinously prone to getting "carried away." Some 1944 critics viewed the women in terms of their aggression: "One (Chip) meets a predatory lady taxi-driver, one (Ozzie) a predatory lady anthropologist, the other (Gabey), Miss T., who turns out to be a dancer at Coney Island," wrote Lewis Nichols, while *The World-Telegram*'s Burton Rascoe praised the boldness of Nancy Walker's "man-eating cab driver."[56] Yet Hildy, Claire (played in the original production by Comden), and Ivy (Sono Osato) transcend stock characters, for all their broad-stroke antics. As Osato recalled in her memoir *Distant Dances*:

> (*On the Town*) was a show that featured women who were independent.... (They) were drawn to their sailors on the basis of mutual (if not unusual) attraction rather than desperate need. Their independence was typical of women in wartime, and the show was original in presenting a humorous and affectionate view of our own reality without the veil of glamour.[57]

The women of *On the Town* confidently hold down jobs, from Hildy, Claire and Ivy, to—less contentedly—perennial subway rider and Grand Illusion Brassiere Company secretary Flossie, who peppers the show with her working-girl running commentary ("And as I said, furthermore, Mr. Gadolphin, nylon stockings are not as important as a girl's self-respect").[58] While Comden and Green would continue to celebrate the working girl in subsequent musicals—including 1953's *Wonderful Town* and 1956's *Bells Are Ringing*—*On the Town* introduced an enduring pattern of liberated urban women in the team's work.

Central to the plot of *On the Town* is Ivy Smith's month-long local celebrity as Miss Turnstiles, whom the naïve Gabey imagines as a cosmopolitan enchantress. *On the Town*'s Miss Turnstiles satirized the real New York institution of Miss Subways, which, as cocreated in 1941 by famed modeling agent John Robert Powers and ad agency J. Walter Thompson, selected one young New York City woman—an attractively average "All-American Girl"—to photograph and profile, with her image

mingled among the subway ads.[59] While many of the monthly World War II–era Miss Subways winners were aspiring actresses, dancers, and fashion designers (among other professions), the text that accompanied their glamour shots stressed the women's charm and desirability alongside their professional ambitions and patriotic fervor. For example, Miss Subways of February 1945, "Lovely Jean Grogan," fancied "fudge sundaes, exotic perfumes, and the Merchant Marine. You can see her in a famous restaurant as a hostess. She attends secretarial school too." *On the Town*'s Miss Turnstiles contest spoofs such contradictory well-roundedness with Miss Turnstiles of June 1944, Ivy Smith, the "exotic" All-American Girl played by the half-Japanese Osato.[60] Projected behind her in the "Miss Turnstiles Variations" ballet, Ivy's poster proclaims:

> Ivy's a home-loving type who likes to go out night-clubbing. She loves the Navy, but her heart belongs to the Army. She's not a career girl, but she is studying singing and ballet at Carnegie Hall and painting at the Museum. She is a frail and flowerlike girl—who's a champion at polo, tennis, and shotput.[61]

Yet, her Miss Turnstiles PR to the contrary, Ivy Smith certainly *is* a career girl. In *On the Town*, Comden and Green slyly undermine the era's oxymorons and double standards about feminine ambition. Claire and Hildy work in traditionally masculine occupations and professions—Hildy as a cab-driver and Claire as a Margaret Mead-like anthropologist (a job the lustful Claire has taken to "make a scientific study of man...and get him out of her system").[62] Yet Ivy Smith stands out as the most ambitious of the three sailors' dates, intensely focused on her ballet classes and singing lessons with Madame Dilly, and clandestinely dancing in Rajah Bimmy's Coney Island burlesque show in order to fund them. As Ivy tells her instructor, "I have been practicing, Madame Dilly. I practice every minute I'm not working....I'm determined to move onwards and upwards."[63] Gabey erroneously imagines an aloof glamour goddess in place of Ivy's hard-working career girl, just as he mistakes the "honky-tonk" Coney Island, in his fantasy, as a "playground of the rich."[64] In a musical that awards its female characters both love and autonomy, Gabey continues to love Ivy—as her true self—as the sailors' New York City escapade comes to an end.

Like *Oklahoma!*, *On the Town* featured a dream ballet—but a film noir-inspired dream ballet unusual in its psychological origin with a male character. As with many World War II–era films and musicals, an undercurrent of masculine anxiety shoots through *On the Town*. Stood up by Ivy in Times Square, Gabey takes the subway to Coney Island, where he

fantasizes about Ivy as an alluring femme fatale wearing a red jersey turban. In "The Great Lover Ballet," Gabey first imagines his "Dream Self" performing a "jazzy... torchy, sexy dance" at Diamond Eddie's, a sophisticated nightclub in his "Dream Coney Island."[65] Then, Diamond Eddie appears to announce "the main event of the evening—Gabey the Great Lover versus Ivy Smith!" A battle of the sexes in pas de deux form, the Great Lover Ballet evokes an anxiety dream of emasculation. While the ballet prizefight starts with "soft, voluptuous movements," Ivy's caresses soon turn hostile:

> She lures him into unwrapping her turban. Suddenly, in her grasp, the length of red cloth becomes a rope with which she proceeds to ensnare the Great Lover until he is helpless in its coils. He is overcome, and Ivy is left to receive the plaudits of the multitude in triumph.[66]

While "The Great Lover Ballet" channels Gabey's subconscious fears, *On the Town*'s Hildy straddles the musical as a bawdy personification of female Id, as originally channeled by the "delightfully tough" Nancy Walker.[67] Hildy persistently invites the self-controlled Chip to "come up to my place."[68] Whereas Ivy Smith's ambitions contradict Miss Turnstiles' billing as "not a career girl," Hildy's list-song showstopper "I Can Cook, Too" celebrates the power and confidence of a woman who distinctly *cannot* cook (even as she invites Chip to "step up to my smorgasbord").[69] Hildy's lack of domestic skills comprise the comic irony of "I Can Cook, Too," as she lunges into the song while performing Comden and Green's stage directions: "(Hildy) drags frying pan from under sofa, blows dust from inside, then wipes the outside of the seat of her pants...," later throwing a chicken at Chip, and during the musical bridge of the song, wheeling around to "display a peeled banana."[70] With its phallic sight gags and fast-paced innuendos, "I Can Cook, Too" is a defiant paean to female self-confidence, as originally performed by the raucous Walker, a "cab-driving broad" in the Merman mold.[71] Walker sang:

> Some girls make wonderful jivers,
> Some girls can hit a high C,
> Some girls make good taxi drivers,
> But what a genius is me.
> I'd make a wonderful jiver,
> I even hit a high C,
> I make the best taxi driver,
> I rate—a big Navy "E!"[72]

Named after the Valkryrie Brunhilde, Walker's larger-than-life Hildy paralleled a number of powerful female characters limned with superhuman dimensions. Following the comic-book boots of Wonder Woman (created by William Moulton Marston in 1941), these Broadway dynamos and deities included not only the title character of *One Touch of Venus* (1943), but also the Amazon women of *By Jupiter.* In this latter, 1942 Rodgers and Hart musical, Theseus both woos and battles the warrior Antiope, the sister of Queen Hippolyta. In *By Jupiter,* Rodgers and Hart satirically frame ancient Greece as a World War II–era America of topsy-turvy gender roles, and the Amazons as modern Rosie the Riveters, as one elder Amazon comments of Theseus: "Imagine having the nerve to tell the queen that these Greeks let their men fight—and the women stay at home and mind the children—like men."[73] Yet while *By Jupiter* set its battle of the sexes within a mythical ancient past, a number of wartime Broadway musicals—influenced by *Oklahoma!*—used the more recent past, and, particularly, the nineteenth century, to address contemporary debates about women's role in the workforce and public life.

NOSTALGIA, UTOPIA, AND FEMINISM IN *BLOOMER GIRL* AND *UP IN CENTRAL PARK*

After *Oklahoma!* opened to rhapsodic reviews and record-breaking ticket sales at the St. James Theatre, on March 31, 1943, the Rodgers and Hammerstein smash inspired a wide-ranging cycle of shows that strove after the ideals of the formally integrated musical play. At the same time, many of these shows—musical play and musical comedy alike—emulated *Oklahoma!*'s nostalgic celebration of rural Americana. Throughout the 1940s, nostalgia—as well as the related musical theater subgenre of fantasy (i.e., *Brigadoon* and *Finian's Rainbow*)—offered wartime and postwar Broadway audiences a combination of patriotic myth-making, escapist fun, and emotional reassurance. Musicals with nostalgic settings flooded the Broadway market, and by the time that the Edwardian-set musical comedy *High Button Shoes* opened in 1948, "George Jean Nathan counted (it) as the 28th nostalgia musical in five years."[74] Of this cycle, *Bloomer Girl* and *Up in Central Park* uniquely use the distance of the past, and the lens of nostalgia, to address very contemporary conflicts concerning women's rights and roles, as well as, in *Bloomer Girl*, issues on civil rights.

Both musical comedies drawing upon the atmosphere of the musical play, *Bloomer Girl* (1944) and *Up in Central Park* (1945) shared period

settings in Victorian-era America, visually spectacular original productions, as well as strong-willed and ambitious heroines who break with feminine convention, only to confront the Choice between marital contentment and participation in public life. Harold Arlen and E. Y. "Yip" Harburg's *Bloomer Girl,* based loosely on Amelia Jenks Bloomer's struggle for dress reform and women's rights, counted among the most progressive musicals of the 1940s. By contrast, *Up in Central Park,* with lyrics and book cowritten by Dorothy Fields, anticipated her *Annie Get Your Gun* in its career-minded heroine and nineteenth-century show business milieu.

Debuting to glowing reviews, *Bloomer Girl* opened at the Shubert Theatre on October 5, 1944, for a run of 657 performances. Based on an unpublished play by Lilith and Dan James, *Bloomer Girl* featured music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by E. Y. "Yip" Harburg (who also directed the musical), a book by Sig Herzig and Fred Saidy, and choreography by Agnes de Mille. The show interwove serious social commentary and artistry (de Mille's lamenting "Civil War Ballet") with acerbic satire and Harburg's witty lyrics, as well as spectacular production numbers. *The Journal-American*'s Jim O'Connor called *Bloomer Girl* "fresh, vigorous, radiant, enchanting, and thoroughly American."[75]

Critics also made many direct comparisons between *Bloomer Girl* and its predecessor *Oklahoma!,* including mention of the former's creative team, led by de Mille. Celeste Holm, the Ado Annie of *Oklahoma!,* originated the role of suffragette heroine Evelina Applegate in *Bloomer Girl,* while Joan McCracken, a featured dancer in *Oklahoma*!, played *Bloomer Girl*'s Ado Annie-like role of Daisy: a maid who converts to the suffragettes' cause. While *Oklahoma*! had similarly foregrounded women's wartime strength in its portrayal of homesteaders Aunt Eller and her niece Laurey, *Bloomer Girl* can be considered the first musical explicitly about the feminist movement.[76]

Celebrating the battles at the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 (to which the musical's fictional setting of "Cicero Falls" alludes), *Bloomer Girl* made incisive historical connections between the Civil War and the World War II eras (as Evelina hands her father a *Gazette* with the headline, "War clouds gathering").[77] The ambitious musical comedy linked women's oppression with slavery, as *Bloomer Girl* portrayed its Civil War–era feminists fighting the historically interwoven battle of abolitionism and women's rights. At the same time, it also connected Rosie the Riveter's trousers with the pantaloons of Amelia Bloomer (introduced in the late

1840s), and the vision of "women running around in pants" (as bloomer girl Evelina is reprimanded by her fiancé Jefferson Calhoun).[78] The musical reflected Arlen and Harburg's fervent liberal commitment to social reform, as the authors paralleled American slavery with then-current Jim Crow laws in the South (a theme that Harburg returned to even more caustically in the "Missetucky" of 1947's *Finian's Rainbow*). As the lyricist later told Studs Terkel, "In *Bloomer Girl*...we showed that the women's movement was part of an indivisible fight for equality. Equality cannot be divided."[79]

Bloomer Girl opens on a "tranquil domestic scene" in fictional Cicero Falls, New York, shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War.[80] Five of the daughters of hoopskirt manufacturer Horatio Appelgate and his wife Serena wait for their husbands—all traveling salesmen—to return to them. In "When the Boys Come Home," the girls sit at their looms and sing fatalistically of a world in which men must work, and women weep and wait for their husbands.[81] However, Horatio's sixth and youngest daughter, the rebellious Evelina, dreams of transforming the status quo and has teamed up against her "hoop king father" with her "bloomer queen" aunt Dolly Bloomer. In a relationship that somewhat reconfigures Aunt Eller and Laurey as feminist activists, *Bloomer Girl* depicts Dolly as "a female tornado, authoritative and magnetic."[82]

Joined by her coquettish maid Daisy, Evelina becomes increasingly committed to the joint causes of the antislavery movement and women's rights in *Bloomer Girl.* When Horatio indignantly informs Dolly that Evelina "is a lady, thank God," Dolly retorts, "Don't thank God, thank Godey."[83] Defying Horatio, Dolly enlists Evelina to help her run her abolitionist and suffragette newspaper *The Lily,* which she publishes from a former bordello, and where she hides the runaway slave Pompey (Dooley Wilson). Inspired by Dolly, Evelina leads her fellow suffragettes in the buoyant anthem, "It Was Good Enough for Grandma (But It's Not Good Enough for Us)," in which she urges the women to "look behind the bustle" to see the female shape of the future.[84]

Forbidden by her father to wear her aunt's bloomers, Evelina cunningly agrees to model "The Applegate Super Hoop of 1861" in Horatio's presentation of his company's newest models (staged in the original production as a crinoline fashion pageant out of the pages of *Godey's Lady's Book,* to the song "Pretty as a Picture"). At the end of the number, Evelina subverts the antebellum beauty parade by "dropping her (hoop) skirt and revealing a pair of bloomers underneath," as Dolly and Daisy rush on,

followed by a battalion of bloomer girls "holding insulting banners aloft (i.e., 'Your Vote is Your Weapon')...printed in the lacy type of a 'God Bless Our Home' sampler."[85] (See Figure 3.1.)

Complicating Evelina's dedication to her feminist cause is a blossoming romance with Kentucky salesman Jefferson "Jeff" Calhoun. Jeff comes to Cicero Falls to purchase hoopskirts, only to fall in love with the spirited Applegate daughter. Evelina is dismayed to discover that the Calhoun family owns Pompey (whom Jeff had unknowingly transported, hidden in a trunk, to Cicero Falls), and that Jeff, despite his own conflicted disapproval of slavery, is under pressure by his brother to return Pompey to the South: "You can't be a coy liberal one moment and a smug Tory the next," as Evelina reprimands him.[86] Numerous complications follow, including Evelina and Dolly being thrown into jail after advertising their "Tom Show." This musical sequence preceded Jerome Robbins' more famous "Small House of Uncle Thomas" ballet in 1951's *The King and I* (in which the bold Mrs. Anna Leonowens represents a more maternally oriented Boss Lady-reformer than Evelina and Dolly).

Figure 3.1 The "Pretty as a Picture" number in *Bloomer Girl.* Celeste Holm, as Evelina Applegate, "drops her hoop skirt and reveals a pair of bloomers underneath." Courtesy of Photofest.

A liberal, if romanticized, depiction of antebellum America, *Bloomer Girl* concludes with Evelina and Dolly prevailing over Horatio, as the US descends into Civil War. Persuaded by Evelina's conviction, Jeff secures Pompey's freedom and lends his approval to his fiancée's activism. After the South fires upon Fort Sumter, Horatio Applegate converts his hoopskirt business to a factory for bloomer-wearing Zouave regiments (Jeff becomes a soldier for the Union, of which Kentucky stays part).[87] The musical circles back to the opening tableau of the Applegate girls soberly singing "When the Boys Come Home": this time not about their salesmen, but their soldiers.

Not unlike the riveting Rosies of *Something for the Boys*, *Bloomer Girl* sold a commercially appealing version of feminism to Broadway audiences, even as Harburg and the musical's creators earnestly advocated for women's rights. Softening the show's stinging satire, director Harburg and producer John C. Wilson filled their production of *Bloomer Girl* with elaborate spectacle and tableaux—including the Tom Show and the "Pretty as a Picture" fashion parade. Additionally, Joan McCracken's Daisy performed a coy "striptease in the spirit of 1861" at the end of the song "T'Morra, T'Morra," disrobing from bloomers and overdress into pantalooned corset. Comically countering the activism of Evelina and Dolly, Daisy expresses concern that "a bright new tomorrow" for women will interfere with her pleasure in the present: "What's the use of being a liberal—if you can't give anything away?"[88]

Even more so than Daisy, Evelina struggles with the pressures of the Choice. While *Bloomer Girl* allows Evelina—eventually—to reconcile revolt and romance, she faces much initial difficulty with Jeff, who tells her, "Such pretty lips should discuss something prettier than politics."[89] After Evelina's scandalous appearance at the fashion show, Jeff (anticipating Fred in *Kiss Me, Kate*) chastises her: "Well, I'll admit (bloomers are) much handier for applying a hairbrush."[90] In the second act, during Evelina and Dolly's imprisonment (where Dolly receives an "apple pie dowdy" from Harriet Beecher Stowe), Evelina confides to her aunt about the difficulty of choosing between her work and Jeff:

> EVALINA: There are so many more important things (than love), Aunt Dolly. Can you imagine Joan of Arc saving France—if she'd had a husband and five children? Oh, Aunt Dolly! ***(And then suddenly all the bravery melts away as she is a little girl again crying in DOLLY's arms).***

DOLLY: Go ahead, dear, I understand. . . . You forget that I was a young girl once myself—about a hundred years ago. I scared away my young man with the scandalous announcement that I wanted to go to college![91]

Dolly's long-ago beau, however, turns out to be the current Governor of New York, who arranges Dolly and Evelina's release from prison, as a favor to the woman he still loves. The Governor announces "And I still haven't given up hope of making Miss Bloomer the Governor's Lady," as Dolly responds, "Governor's Lady, hell—I'm going to be Governor!"[92]

In contrast to *Bloomer Girl*'s evocation of Rosie the Riveter, *Up in Central Park* actually featured a heroine named Rosie. Like Evelina Applegate, Rosie Moore is compelled to choose between marital prospects and professional goals (in this case, not as a suffragette, but a professional singer). *Up in Central Park*'s creators set the musical a decade after *Bloomer Girl*—not in rural upstate New York, but the corrupt Gilded Age of Boss Tweed's Manhattan. *Up in Central Park* can be read less a fictionalized musical history of first-wave feminism, à la *Bloomer Girl*, than a nostalgic fantasy portraying its implications upon the lives of Victorian women. Less overtly political than *Bloomer Girl*'s progressive nostalgia, *Up in Central Park* also considers the problem of female ambition from the safety of period distance.

Like the Arlen–Harburg musical, *Up in Central Park* premiered in the wake of the *Oklahoma!* revolution. The musical evoked a picture-postcard nineteenth century, while "attempt(ing) to graft the nefariousness of the Tweed ring onto the nostalgia of Currier and Ives."[93] Produced by Mike Todd, and featuring music by Sigmund Romberg, lyrics by Dorothy Fields, and a book by Dorothy and Herbert Fields, *Up in Central Park* opened at the Century Theatre on January 27, 1945, for a run of 504 performances. *The New York Daily News*'s John Chapman noted the creators' wish "to make a musical which is warm, gentle and affectionate, instead of one which is brash, fast, and smarty-smarty."[94] Other reviewers found the musical as "lack(ing) snap," despite Todd's opulent production.[95] While *Bloomer Girl* had dazzled audiences with its "Sunday in Cicero Falls" ballet, *Up in Central Park* won scenic raves for its own picturesque Victorian spectacle (by designer Howard Bay), including a sequence of Currier and Ives tableaux that unveiled a Central Park skating pond with falling snow.

Up in Central Park's primary romantic plot—setting political reformers against Tammany Hall—echoed *Bloomer Girl*'s Civil War romance across abolitionist lines. The daughter of a Tammany laborer (and Boss Tweed crony), heroine Rosie pursues romance with John Matthews, the *New York Times* reporter and reformer. With his caricaturist friend Thomas Nash, John sets about to expose Tweed's corruption (the musical, set in the 1870s, was based upon real historical incidents in which Tweed swindled hundreds of thousands of dollars during the renovation of Central Park).

Both the characters of Rosie Moore (played originally by Maureen Cannon) and her best friend Bessie O'Cahane (Betty Bruce) recall not only Rosie the Riveter, but evoke the Irish American Cinderella working girls of the 1920s. Like such earlier musicals as *Irene* and *Sally*, *Up in Central Park* feminized the Alger narrative, while setting the story in the very era of the *Ragged Dick* author himself. As John Chapman noted, "The girls crave to rise in the world—to leave 23rd St., become famous, get into society, and go to such places as Delmonico's."[96] Bessie, the musical's soubrette, imagines her American dream achieved through a "brilliant marriage" that will raise her "Up from the Gutter."

By contrast—and echoing the "onwards and upwards" determination of *On the Town*'s Ivy Smith—Rosie dreams less of material-girl excess than of becoming a second Jenny Lind. Her plan is first encouraged, and then resented by, the equally ambitious John Matthews, who wants his own "taste of the American pie" as a journalist.[97] Upon coming to 23rd Street to profile her Tammany father, John dismisses Rosie's longing to be a singer:

JOHN: Oh, no, you're young and you're pretty and you have talent. But you're in bad company here—do you want to marry a Tammany boy, or a saloon-keeper?

ROSIE: Heaven forbid. I told you I'm having a career. I'm not quite ready for Opera yet. . . . I guess I'll have to study a little.[98]

John obligingly sends Rosie to study voice at a conservatory in Boston, and when she comes back, proposes marriage to her. Rosie responds:

> I would (marry you) indeed . . . sometime. But I've got big dreams now, and they're eating out the insides of me. I want to capsize the stars! At least, see if I can. Isn't that a scandalous way to be? At the same time, I love you so much, I make myself crazy between the two.[99]

While Rosie learns that her voice is too thin for opera, it's "just right for the Central Park Gardens," and she is promised success under the guidance of Central Park Gardens manager (and Tweed henchman) Vincent Peters.[100] Possessively, John protests: "I don't want you to sing anyplace

yet. I want you to go back to Boston and study. . . . I want you *out* of New York."[101] Rosie furiously defies this commandment, as she becomes both a singing star and the wealthy wife of Vincent Peters.

In a plot evoking wartime gender conflicts, Rosie's success as a performer increasingly emboldens her ambitions. Rosie's first ballad, sung privately to John, is a demure ballad called "Carousel in the Park." By contrast, her second number, sung in performance at the Central Park Gardens, is a rollicking Bowery Waltz-style showstopper called "The Fireman's Bride." The song chronicles the story of Fireman Joe McGee's wife, who would rather "bounce in the fireman's net" than sit at home by the fireplace.[102] A likely parable of the war's mobilization of working women, the song's lyrical imagery evokes bravery and risk, while suggesting a patriotic connection to the factories and shipyards of World War II–era America.

While *Up in Central Park* ends with Rosie and John's reconcilement—as John and Thomas bust the Tweed ring that has supported Rosie's rise—it also does so more on John's terms. "We never should have left 23rd Street. We all got too big for our breeches," sighs Rosie, whose marriage to Vincent Peters is fortuitously annulled.[103] Rosie agrees to become Mrs. John Matthews, as well as to resume her Boston singing lessons as "sweet and pure little Rosie Moore" ("The public's memory is short. . . . Mrs. Vincent Peters will be forgotten").[104]

In the rapprochement of Rosie and John, *Up in Central Park* offered a somewhat tidy resolution to the career versus marriage conflict encapsulated in "The Fireman's Bride." By contrast, Dorothy Fields' next musical, *Annie Get Your Gun,* used its theatrical setting to substantially complicate the World War II–era battle of the sexes. Once again, Fields evoked a show business Boss Lady in nineteenth-century America: this one creating fireworks in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, rather than sitting home by her fireside.

THEATRICALITY, FEMININITY, AND PERFORMING SUBMISSION: POSTWAR MUSICAL COMEDY

"I see a woman may be made a fool of, if she has not spirit to resist."—Katherina Minola, The Taming of the Shrew *(c. 1592) and* Kiss Me, Kate *(1948)*

From modern musicals like *On the Town* to nostalgic shows like *Bloomer Girl* and *Up in Central Park,* the Broadway musical stage from 1942 through 1945 offered an array of liberated working heroines, echoing new freedoms for American women. Yet after the war, American society would increasingly echo Petruchio's words of domestication to Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew:* "For I am born to tame you, Kate/And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate/Conformable as other household Kates" (2.1.278–280).[105] The Broadway musicals of the World War II years had largely asserted their heroines' ambition and independence during a time in which working women were needed to fill the factories and offices of America. These musicals were informed by an atmosphere of patriotic exigency that nonetheless had empowered American women. "It was wartime and women were occupying men's jobs. Women were in charge of their destinies. That changed after the war," as Betty Comden reminisced in 1998.[106]

The rise of postwar misogyny and Freudian ego psychology, combined with an atmosphere of "postwar hyper-domesticity," reinstated traditional gender roles, "tamed the shrew," and sought to reduce women to their biological function.[107] The new doctrine of "Momism" gained prevalence with the 1942 publication of Philip Wylie's *A Generation of Vipers,* which blamed aberrant female ambition for neurotic behavior and oppressive mothering patterns. In response to this insidious sea change in social attitudes, a number of feminist writers of Broadway musicals shifted their strategies in treating the battle of the sexes theme, which continued its prevalence into the 1940s.

It is significant that *Annie Get Your Gun, Kiss Me, Kate,* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*—the three major shows about women's resistance to postwar "conformability"—were primarily conceived as musical comedies, rather than integrated musical plays. In fact, musical comedy supplied a main stage for these alternative feminist strategies in the postwar era, supported by the genre's emphasis on the power of performance and theatricality; its New York City and often backstage milieus; and its traditional focus on the rags-to-riches ascent of women (i.e., *Irene* and *Sally*). As Andrea Most has written in her persuasive reading of *Annie Get Your Gun*: "Despite the fact that women's roles are being dramatically revised in supposed accordance with biological terms in the postwar period, this musical insists on the power of the theater to resist 'natural' or biological categories."[108] As Most had noted, musical comedy glorifies the *un*natural, while highlighting the performative nature of gender roles.

In *Annie Get Your Gun,* as well as *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes,* theatrical settings inform the heroine's performed submission to dominating men: respectively, Annie Oakley to Frank Butler; Lilli Vanessi to both Fred Graham and Harrison Howell; and Lorelei Lee to a number of

"gentlemen." All three musicals, produced between 1947 and 1949, were, in part, generated by women, as cowritten by male composers and lyricists with female librettists (or co-librettists): *Annie Get Your Gun*'s Dorothy Fields, *Kiss Me, Kate*'s Bella Spewack, and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*' Anita Loos. All three shows, as well, revive the principles of feminist camp prevalent in 1920s gold digger comedy. At the same time, they adapted these techniques to the landscape of postwar America, in which disguise and dissemblance became powerful assimilative strategies for women suddenly pressured to transform from Rosie the Riveter to Betty Crocker (or, in the terms of the Cinderella myth, from the ball back to the hearthside). Indeed, the tense cultural climate of the postwar years replaced the overt feminism of *On the Town* and *Bloomer Girl* with the covert power codes of *Annie Get Your Gun* and other musical comedies.

Featuring music and lyrics by Irving Berlin, and a book by Dorothy and Herbert Fields, *Annie Get Your Gun* marked Merman's reunion with Dorothy Fields after both *Stars in Your Eyes* and *Something for the Boys*. With Merman in the role of the legendary sharpshooter, the musical drew strongly upon the persona of "an actress whose own femininity was problematic throughout her career."[109] While *Annie Get Your Gun* earned glory for Berlin, the musical originated as the brainchild of Dorothy Fields, who conceived of *Annie* as a star vehicle for Merman after being told of a sharpshooting World War II soldier at Coney Island.[110] Among the greatest hits of the decade, as directed by Joshua Logan, *Annie Get Your Gun* opened at the Imperial Theatre for a record-breaking run of 1,146 performances.

Annie Get Your Gun has often been criticized for its ostensibly anti-feminist ending, in which Annie intentionally loses her shooting match with Frank Butler (Ray Middleton) by using a faulty gun: as Chief Sitting Bull guides her, "Annie win match today—lose Frank. Annie lose match—win Frank."[111] Annie's self-sabotaging defeat to Frank at the conclusion of the musical pointedly illustrates the sacrifices that many women made in their return to domesticity at the end of the war. Yet Annie's performance of submission is vital to the musical. In *Annie Get Your Gun*, the tough sharpshooter heroine learns that the "show business" of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show can apply to life as well as work—and to her relationship with lover and rival Frank Butler, as Annie learns to play-act at feminine docility. In a compromise that recalls the conclusion of the film *Woman of the Year*, Annie relinquishes her top-billed Boss Lady status, while deceptively holding onto her professional stature and celebrity luster.

While Annie resists her domestication by Frank in *Annie Get Your Gun*, so too did Berlin and the Fieldses defy their show's total absorption into the form and style of the musical play. As produced by Rodgers and Hammerstein (who had originally passed up the offer to write the show), *Annie Get Your Gun* incorporated aspects of the musical play: from its turn-of-the-century Americana setting, to the dramatic strength of its libretto and Merman's performance, of which *The New York Post*'s Vernon Rice noted, "No longer is she just Ethel Merman cutting capers upon the stage. She is now able to develop a consistent characterization and stay with it to the show's end."[112] Yet, as Andrea Most has argued, the musical comedy theatricality of *Annie Get Your Gun* contradicted the "realism (and) psychology" of the integrated musical play.[113] Most observes, "By insisting on an American West posited as a stage set rather than a geographic location, Berlins and the Fieldses implicitly critique the *Oklahoma!* craze by writing a musical which forcefully advocates an older brand of theatricality—one that had served all writers well. *Annie Get Your Gun* is a defense of the theater and theatrical in opposition to the dangerously seductive appeal of 'nature.'"[114]

In *Annie Get Your Gun*, the title character eventually learns that womanhood, in the "soft and pink" terms that Frank demands it, is a role that can be both assumed and discarded, according to its convenience. In their first exchanges, Frank is disarmed by the "pistol-packing" Annie, but also put on his guard by his perception of Annie as backwoods Boss Lady:

> ANNIE: Whar ye goin'? What's the matter? Don't ye like me?
> FRANK: Sure honey. I like you fine, but you're not woman enough for me. I like the dainty kind—the kind that faints when she sees a mouse.
> ANNIE: Meanin,' I suppose, when I see a mouse, the *mouse* faints.[115]

Frank expands upon his trepidation in his establishing ballad, "The Girl That I Marry," in which he confides to Annie that his ideal woman is her clinging-vine antithesis: a "doll I can carry."[116] Annie assures Frank, "All I wanna be is a pink and white woman like the kind ye said ye liked."[117] At the same time, Annie continually undermines such sentiments with her unparalleled skill and implacable ambition: defeating Frank in their first sharp-shooting match and earning star billing in Buffalo Bill's show, where a giant poster (larger than Frank's) announces, "Introducing Annie Oakley: The Greatest Rifle Shot in the World."[118]

Like Dorothy Fields's earlier *Up in Central Park*, *Annie Get Your Gun* can be considered an American Cinderella story, as the show's heroine rises from Darke County urchin to star sharpshooter and elegant New York "lady." At the same time, Annie does not imagine herself as the passive traditional Cinderella, but rather in the role traditionally preserved for Prince Charming: the hero and savior. When Charlie, Buffalo Bill's manager, tries to convince Annie to substitute her planned sharpshooting act for a much flashier entrance (and thereby save the fortunes of the Wild West Show), Annie anticipates Frank being grateful and thrilled, "Jes' like in a fairy tale! You're sure he'll like it?"[119] Indeed, Frank does not like Annie's act and temporarily breaks off with her, writing in a letter: "You're a smart girl, Annie. Too smart for me."[120]

Unlike *Annie Get Your Gun*'s secondary couple—the young lovers Winnie and Tommy, who blithely duet on "I'll Share It All with You"—Annie and Frank's romance is premised on rivalry and competition.[121] While *Annie Get Your Gun* takes place in Victorian-era New York (and the Wild West simulacra within it), Frank's envy seems fueled by the contemporary currents of ego psychology that pervaded the postwar era. *Annie Get Your Gun*'s libretto is filled with Freudian imagery, beginning with phallic symbolism of their competing guns (while Annie's arms also suggest the military regalia recently packed away by WAVES and WACs). In their first encounter, Annie unwittingly calls Frank, to his face, "that big swollen-headed stiff" (Frank has "challenged anybody" in a shooting match).[122] Later, Frank describes his smitten state in the Freudian vocabulary of castration anxiety (recalling Gabey's "Great Lover Ballet" in *On the Town*): "Like a toothless, clawless tiger/Like an organ-grinder's bear/Like a knight without his armor/Like Samson without his hair."[123] After Annie spoils the "fairy tale" with her motorcycle trick, Frank explodes: "... I thought she was sweet... and simple too... that's a hot one! Simple! In two weeks I'd wound up bein' her assistant... cookin' for her, too, more'n likely."[124]

Guided by the fairy godfather figure of Chief Sitting Bull, Annie uses theatricality to bridge the binaries of the Choice; simultaneously to keep her career and hold her man, even as Annie's self-sabotage shows "Cupid's bow win(ing) out over Annie's gun," as *Time* described.[125] The Fields' libretto leaves no doubt that Frank himself is "on" to Annie's ruse, and that he secretly knows himself the lesser marksman. When Annie keeps missing her target in the final shooting match, due to the fixed gun, Frank's lovelorn assistant Dolly tells him, "Somebody got to those guns"—only to be upbraided by Frank: "Shut up, Dolly."[126] *Annie Get Your Gun* resonates not only as an allegory of Rosie the Riveter, but with the biography of Dorothy Fields, as an eminent female lyricist and librettist in a male-dominated field.

While Fields provided the genesis of *Annie Get Your Gun*, the journalist, playwright, and screenwriter Bella Spewack played a key role in both the conception and writing of *Kiss Me, Kate*. As Irene Dash notes, Spewack not only convinced Porter to collaborate on the project, but wrote the vast majority of its libretto (with husband Samuel only becoming involved once the musical had been copyrighted).[127] As directed by John C. Wilson, and starring Alfred Drake as Fred Graham/Petruchio, and Patricia Morison as Lilli Vanessi/Katherine, *Kiss Me, Kate* opened at the New Century Theatre on December 30, 1948, and ran for 1,077 performances. The musical joined *Annie Get Your Gun* as one of the biggest critical and commercial Broadway hits of the decade, with a book by Bella and Samuel Spewack, and a beguilingly lush and versatile Cole Porter score.

Many resemblances connect *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate*. These range from the strong developmental role of Dorothy Fields and Bella Spewack as respective co-librettists, to the popularity of "There's No Business Like Show Business" and "Another Op'nin,' Another Show" as dual Broadway anthems. Both backstage musicals draw from the carnivalesque color and vitality of theatrical milieus: Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in *Annie Get Your Gun*, and the commedia-flavored Verona sets of *Kiss Me, Kate*. For both Irving Berlin and Cole Porter, the shows marked attempts to fuse the cohesion, depth, and musical sophistication of the musical play with the raucous spectacle of musical comedy. Porter acknowledged his inspiration by Berlin: "I liked what Irving Berlin had done with *Annie Get Your Gun*. His having so much music in it made me feel like trying a similar thing."[128]

Like *Annie Get Your Gun*, inspired by both a 1935 Barbara Stanwyck movie and Fields' sharp-shooting epiphany at the Stage Door Canteen, *Kiss Me, Kate* originated from a variety of sources. Following two feuding ex-spouses performing in a musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, the show-within-a-show frames its adaptation of *Shrew* within a production resembling the 1935 Theatre Guild staging starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, whose backstage bickering had become legendary. Ethan Mordden recounts two accounts of the show's genesis. In the first, coproducer Saint Subber suggested basing the musical on the carnival-themed production with the Lunts. In the second, Bella Spewack suggested drawing upon a backstage musical framing, though one different from Shakespeare's own "Induction" with the drunken peddler Christopher

Sly.[129] In Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, the frequently cut "Induction" (retained in the Lunts' 1935 production) suggests Katherine's brutal taming by Petruchio as the misogynistic "flattering dream" (1.55) of Christopher Sly, who desires a "wife in all obedience" (2.104).[130]

Like *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Kiss Me, Kate* has been criticized for the treatment of its tempestuous heroine. The show depicts movie star-turned-Shakespearean actress Lilli Vanessi being paddled onstage by ex-husband (and present flame) Fred and brought to "a new note of softness—a new humility" as an actress.[131] Yet the performance of submission equally informs *Kiss Me, Kate*: a musical that subtly and slyly undermines the post-war domestication of women through a central irony. In the process of playing Katherine, who assumes "new-built virtue and obedience" (5.2.124) to Petruchio, Lilli Vanessi escapes her engagement to Washington, D.C. Republican diplomat Harrison Howell, who has showered Lilli with jewels and hopes to make her his "little woman."[132] In contrast to the matinee idol Fred, whose histrionic glamour and self-theatricalizing nature Lilli shares, Harrison offers "peace—quiet—stability" at his thirty thousand-acre ranch in Georgia. Here, Harrison likes to ride his horses, eat his Wheaties, read *Dick Tracy* comics, and—above all—take naps. As Fred taunts Lilli, who threatens to leave Ford's Theater in Baltimore where the *Shrew* musical is trying out:

> FRED: . . . After all, what is there in the theater to hold you? It's so tawdry—the dreary business of creating a part—the dull routine of watching a character come to life. The meaningless excitement of opening night. . . . I don't blame you for leaving all that—when you've got a chance for happiness—real happiness—with Harrison. . . . What do you call the place? *Solitude?*
>
> HOWELL: No. *Contentment.*
>
> FRED: Ah! Contentment. Just think. No cocktail parties. No malicious gossip. No backbiting friends. In fact, no friends at all, except an occasional mongoose who'll drop in for dinner.[133]

While Harrison promises her "contentment," Lilli doesn't suspect him as the former sugar daddy "Harold" to seductive soubrette Lois Lane (the *Shrew* musical's Bianca). In *Kiss Me, Kate*, Harrison Howell suggests not only the promise of dull domestication for Lilli, but possible infidelity. Fred's tactics to Lilli—his ironic rhapsody about the "mad whirl" of Lilli's new life—evoke the conventions of the "Comedy of Remarriage" genre, and such films as 1937's *The Awful Truth* and 1940's *His Girl Friday*. In

fact, *Kiss Me, Kate* can be considered a "Musical Comedy of Remarriage," as Fred and Lilli reignite connubial romance through a mix of Shakespeare, screwball comedy, and song and dance.[134]

Fred's tactics are neither gentle nor considerate, and he even resorts to enlisting the two highbrow gangsters to hold Lilli hostage in the theater. Yet the nature of Fred's taming is entirely different from that of Petruchio, who wants to "assert his awful rule and right supremacy" (5.2.114) over his wife.[135] By contrast, Fred recognizes his ex-wife as a woman of the world and a woman of the stage: an actress who should not be tamed as a domestic partner, but rather taught discipline in her stage work. As Fred tells Harrison, meaning the exact opposite of every word: "Never has a man acquired a woman with more sweetness of disposition, who's more even-tempered, has more poise, more gentleness, more sheer unadulterated goodness."[136] Just as Hildy Johnson, in the 1940 film *His Girl Friday*, is by her very nature a brilliant and brawling "newspaper man" (in Walter Burns' words), so is Lilli Vanessi an actress—not a "little woman" housewife. Paradoxically, Lilli obtains her liberation through the acting of Katherine's submission, as she chants an abridgement of the play's famous soliloquy with, "I Am Ashamed That Women are So Simple."

In its sophisticated assertion that a woman like Lilli belongs in the theater, rather than the home and garden, *Kiss Me, Kate* evokes the Comedy of Remarriage while contradicting the message of a film classic that premiered the next year. In 1950's *All About Eve*, Bette Davis's Margo Channing chooses marriage to her playwright-husband over her stage career, after weathering the professional and romantic threats posed by the scheming title character. Margo, a theatrical Boss Lady, muses:

> Funny business, a woman's career. The things you drop on your way up the ladder, so you can move faster. You forget you'll need them again when you go back to being woman. That's one career all females have in common—whether we like it or not—being a woman. Sooner or later we've all got to work at it, no matter what other careers we've had or wanted . . . and, in the last analysis, nothing is any good unless you can look up just before dinner or turn around in bed—and there he is. Without that, you're not woman. You're something with a French provincial office or a book full of clippings—but you're not a woman.[137]

While *All About Eve* ends with the taming of Margo Channing, *Kiss Me, Kate* suggests that Lilli can only be a full and complete woman *with* her "books full of clippings." While Fred assumes a patriarchal role in *Kiss*

Me, Kate, as prestigious Shakespearean actor and director to the gilded Hollywood Lilli, they nonetheless find equal ground and mutuality through their shared identity as theatrical vagabonds.

Performances of submission—in the dual form of Lorelei Lee and Dorothy Shaw—also animate *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Opening a year after *Kiss Me, Kate*, the adaptation of Loos's novel shared the same director in John C. Wilson. Ranging in location from the Île de France ocean liner to the boîtes of Paris, the 1920s-set *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* lacked the overtly backstage milieus of *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate*. Nevertheless, *Blondes'* dual heroines and best friends share identities as stage performers: brunette Dorothy still the Ziegfeld showgirl (and irreverent broad) of Loos's fictional satire, and blond Lorelei now a former Follies Girl, as well. Both characters, too, draw upon theatricality and artifice to resist and subvert the control of "gentlemen" over their lives—particularly Lorelei, the postwar resurrection of the gold-digging chorus girl, whom Loos also portrays as an unlikely 1940s Boss Lady (as compared to the "professional lady" of the 1925 novel). In a star-making turn, Carol Channing originated the role of Lorelei in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Of Channing's performance, Brooks Atkinson marveled, "There has never before been anything like this in human society."[138]

With a book cowritten by Loos and Joseph Fields, and a brassy, Porteresque score by composer Jule Styne and lyricist Leo Robin, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* opened at the Ziegfeld Theatre on December 8, 1949, and ran for 740 performances. While *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate* had absorbed strong aspects of the musical play, even while remaining essentially musical comedies, critics hailed *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* as a "big, brassy, scuffling, raucous brawl."[139] While not the first 1940s musical to satirize the Jazz Age (the 1945 Comden and Green musical *Billion Dollar Baby* had done so first), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* captured a nostalgia craze for the 1920s that flavored the early Cold War era, much as a Victorian/Edwardian vogue had characterized the wartime years in shows like *Bloomer Girl* and *Up in Central Park*. Studded with parodies of Ziegfeldian production numbers, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* even nodded to 1920's *Sally*, in the ensemble number "Homesick Blues."

Unlike Annie Oakley and Lilli Vanessi, Lorelei Lee is not a career woman, despite having worked as a professional entertainer. Yet of the three protagonists, it is the untamable and unsentimental Lorelei who arguably wields the most power in her relationships with men, albeit through gender subterfuge. Adapting the plot of her novel toward the romantic ends of musical comedy, Loos nevertheless gives the ostensibly defenseless (and "dumb blonde") Lorelei the upper hand in her dealings with the gentlemen. Loos codes her anti-Cinderella heroine as a brilliant businesswoman, as Lorelei flirts with "Zipper King" Joseph Gage and coaxes a diamond tiara from Francis Beekman, only to end up with her "Button King" Gus Esmond.[140] In a 1949 article for *Vogue*, called "The Decline and Fall of Blondes," Anita Loos subtly addressed the postwar backlash to the professional accomplishments of women (writing with a touch of Lorelei's persona):

> But there was one repercussion that even Herr Marx, with all his broad vision, did not visualize . . . is that we do things better than the opposite sex. I mean gentlemen will go to all the trouble of keeping office hours and holding Board Meetings and getting Mr. Gallup to make a poll . . . in order to reach a decision which any blonde could reach while she was refurbishing her lipstick. I mean our mentality is so much brighter than theirs that gentlemen, in order to prevent comparisons from being odious, have given our mentality a different name and termed it "Female intuition." But whatever they term it, it is nothing but just brain-power and it begins where theirs leaves off.
>
> So the great danger to Political Economy in such a Trend (according to the historical writer called Mr. Gibbon) is that any time gentlemen allow we girls to publicly reveal that our mental stamina is stronger than theirs, the same historical tragedy happens that happened . . . when the ancient Roman Empire and Rome began to decline and fall. So now we are having a Decline and Fall . . . [141]

Lending her distinctive feminist vision to *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, Loos proves Lorelei's unsuspected "mental stamina." In the dénouement of the musical, Gus Esmond's button tycoon father lambasts Lorelei as a "creature who will tear everything I've worked myself into this wheelchair trying to preserve."[142] Yet Lorelei proves Esmond wrong in his assumption that the two "have nothing at all in common."[143] In a final scene that echoes (if not parodies) the Career Girl Cinderella musicals of the 1920s, such as *Helen of Troy, New York*, Lorelei not only concocts an advertising campaign and jingle for Esmond's Buttons ("Button Up with Esmond"), but reports that she negotiated a merger with rival Zipper King Joseph Gage (Lorelei's ex-flame). "Gus, why in hell didn't you tell me she was a financial genius!," Esmond exclaims to his son.[144] *Blondes* concludes with the taming of Gus, not Lorelei, as he agrees to tolerate Lorelei's whims and indiscretions—to love her for life, though "with no peace of mind."[145]

The casting of the Amazonian, five-foot-ten Channing as the book's diminutive Lorelei added to the power of the musical comedy Lorelei. Loos

described Channing as, "a big girl with the mannerisms and the concept of herself as a *petite*."[146] Critics raved about Channing's "wonderful spirit of parody," while comparing her variously to Mae West, Ethel Merman, and Beatrice Lillie.[147] This stroke of casting (Yvonne Adair, as Dorothy, also loomed over the men) created a potent and *gestic* sight gag summarizing the imbalance of power between Lorelei, Dorothy, and their beaux. Brooks Atkinson noted, in his essay "The Blonde Mantrap":

> Lorelei Lee, the femme fatale of Miss Loos's original work, was coy. Her bogus innocence drew men to her protectingly. Miss Channing, however, is a big girl even in her stocking feet. She could pulverize any gentleman on the stage, and particularly the amiable Jack McCauley, who plays the part of her loyal and generous boyfriend.[148] (See Figure 3.2.)

Figure 3.2 "She could pulverize any gentleman on the stage." Carol Channing as Lorelei Lee, with gendarmes Howard Morris and Bob Neukem, in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Courtesy of Photofest.

The collective feminist parody of Loos and Channing was enough to dismay one critic, however. Richard Watts Jr. of *The New York Post* complained (marking one section of his review, "The Amazons"):

> As a matter of fact, the scheme of selecting two such hearty and towering girls as Miss Channing and Yvonne Adair... and sending them galumphing about the stage added, I thought, a rather eerie touch to the proceedings. The sight of a couple of demure and petite young ladies making idiots out of a succession of stalwart men is an amusing one, but I suspect the cream of the joke was spoiled when the girls gave every indication of being able to out-box and out-wrestle any four males in the cast.[149]

As the late-1940s cultural climate closed in against women's wartime independence, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, as well as *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, provided powerful and subversive criticisms against the circumscribing of their intellectual and professional horizons. While Lorelei had both epitomized and satirized 1920s archetypes of the gold-digging chorus girl, she now stood against the misogynist backlash of the postwar era: not as an overt career-woman Boss Lady, but a professional lady who was nevertheless the secret agent of her own economic survival. Lorelei defiantly defends her strategies in the name of "self-preservation," rather than mere "compensation" in her dazzling gold-digger's manifesto, "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend."[150]

In fact, the bawdy, rowdy *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* earned raves in the midst of a critical backlash to "the reforms of Rodgers and Hammerstein" (whose signature choreographer, Agnes de Mille, also staged the dances for *Gentlemen*).[151] John Chapman noted that the show "makes no attempt to be arty, but it is miraculously artful," while Robert Garland went so far as to exult that *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, "... calling itself a musical comedy, lives all the way up to that delectable designation. No musical drama! No musical play!... Happy musical-comedy days are here again. Hurray. Hurrah. Hurray!"[152]

Indeed, some of the era's Broadway musical creators, as well as critics, expressed ambivalence about the monumental achievements of the Rodgers and Hammerstein revolution. In 1947, Brooks Atkinson opined in *The New York Times* (reviewing the burlesque-flavored *High Button Shoes*), "Nothing constructive has happened for the theatre in years to match the recent development of the musical stage out of routine into art. *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Brigadoon* and *Allegro* represent a genuine revolution, and the pleasure they provide is superlative.... But it

would be a pity if the quest for beauty left us destitute of laughter, which is always the heartiest thing the workaday theatre has to contribute to the life of the times."[153] Some commentators understood the larger shifts driving the musical play revolution: the move, during the World War II years, to a more solemn and sentimentalized American cultural landscape. Eulogizing the risqué breed of Rodgers and Hart musical comedies that *Oklahoma!* had rendered passé, Lorenz Hart's friend Clifton Fadiman reflected, in 1955, upon this shift in the zeitgeist:

> With the coming of the forties (and the war) the whole idea of "sophistication" had the air let out of it. We were now compelled to grow up for real. The "knowingness" of *Pal Joey* began to seem very unlike true knowledge.... The Rodgers–Hammerstein purified musical comedy, with its stress on the wholesome, has weaned us away from our indiscretions, with their mild suggestion of the street corner, of the Larry Hart school.[154]

It is worth further exploring the idea of the "Rodgers and Hammerstein-purified musical comedy," for the "reforms" of the musical play were not only formal and dramaturgical ones, but involved the reformation of their female characters, including such hellions as Lorelei Lee. What the 1940s musical play attempted to tame was not only the formal irruptions of musical comedy, but the disruptions of its divas, and the bad (if not shrewish) behavior of its female characters: in short, the unruly carnivalesque of the musical comedy woman.

TAMING THE "MADCAP MAIDEN" IN THE POSTWAR BROADWAY MUSICAL

In the second act of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* (1945), Carrie Pipperidge—the saucy former mill girl now married to merchant Enoch Snow and the mother of his nine children—rejoices in the forbidden delights of a musical comedy called *Madcap Maidens*, sharing with her best friend Julie Jordan the juicy details of Carrie's trip to Broadway:

> JULIE: Did you seen any of them there "extravaganzas?"
>
> CARRIE: Enoch took me to one of those things. The curtain went up and the fust thing y'see is twelve hussies with nothin' on their legs but tights!
>
> JULIE: What happened then?

> CARRIE: Well! Enoch jest grabbed hold o' my arm and dragged me out of the theayter. But I went back the next day—to a matinee—to see how the story came out.... There was one girl who sang an awful ketchy song. She threw her leg over a fence like this—

Interrupted by the appearance of Julie's daughter Louise, Carrie changes the subject, only to "swing her leg back over the chair and pull her skirt up over her knee," in imitation of the Broadway soubrette. Carrie sings joyously to Julie:

> I'm a tomboy,
> Jest a tomboy!
> I'm a madcap maiden from Broadway!
> I'm a tomboy,
> A merry tomboy![155]

Enoch (whom Carrie had caught ogling the twelve tights-wearing "hussies" at the extravaganza) now interrupts the two women, telling his son Junior to turn his eyes away from his mother. When Carrie, guilty, explains, "I was just telling Julie about thet show—*Madcap Maidens*," Enoch huffs, "We also saw *Julius Caesar*. Wouldn't that be a better play to quote from?" Carrie meekly protests, "I don't remember much of thet one. All the men were dressed in nightgowns and it made me sleepy."[156]

Sometimes cut from productions of *Carousel*, this is a complex exchange not only between Carrie and the strait-laced Enoch, but also a dialogue between Oscar Hammerstein II and the genre that the midcentury musical play had absorbed, refined, and reformed. Here, Hammerstein shrewdly acknowledges the uninhibited allure of *Madcap Maidens*, with its tradition of "vaudevillesque musical comedy."[157] These conventions stretched back to the burlesque extravaganza of the nineteenth century in which *Carousel* is set. At the same time, however Hammerstein also sweeps *Carousel* back into the dramatic and musical flow of its psychological narrative, from which Carrie Pipperidge threatens to derail it. During the wartime and postwar era, the musical play behaved increasingly like Enoch Snow with his mischief-making wife, taming the virtuosities of the diva, with her "excessive, performative displays of self (that) refutes the limits of femininity, even as her voice and body are insistently female," as described by Stacy Wolf.[158] The integrated musical play tamped down the diva's "inherently disruptive musicality."[159] As Bradley Rogers observes,

"To some degree... integration is an attempt to integrate the diva into the narrative line, such that her star power cannot 'stop the show,' and such that the affective power of the musical register is diminished for the greater good."[160]

The pre-Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway musical partook heavily of the mode of carnivalesque, expressed in musical comedy's "festal airs."[161] As famously delineated by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*, the mode relies on the subversion of cultural, sexual, and gender hierarchies through the topsy-turvy tactics of the carnival: parody, burlesque, and masquerade (strategies akin to Freud's idea of the joke as rebellious "pleasure in nonsense").[162] The raucous women of musical comedy, like the madcap maiden admired by Carrie Pipperidge, are steeped in the carnivalesque tradition of getting "Carried Away" (as Claire de Loon sings in *On the Town*). However, as *South Pacific* demonstrates, the integrated musical play is unable completely to renounce the carnivalesque woman of musical comedy, just as Rogers notes the "impossibility of extricating vaudeville and burlesque from musical theater."[163] Rather, the musical play tends to partition and compartmentalize the female carnivalesque, as a comparison of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *South Pacific* suggests.

Opening within seven months of each other in 1949, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *South Pacific* are striking for both their similarities and contrasts.[164] Both heroines hail from Little Rock, Arkansas: respectively Lorelei as the canny "little girl from Little Rock" and Nellie Forbush (originally played by Mary Martin) as the naïve navy nurse and unabashed "cockeyed optimist." Both women, too, involve themselves with older, wealthier men: Lorelei's "gentlemen" as compared with Nellie's May–December romance with cultured French plantation farmer Emile de Becque. Of the two musicals, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is pure musical comedy carnivalesque: in the subversive stratagems and theatricality of Dorothy and Lorelei (and the diva performances of the actresses playing them), in the untamable exploits of Lorelei, as well as in the show's milieu of an ocean liner: presented as a carnivalesque space of topsy-turvy possibility.[165]

Unlike *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *South Pacific* reinforces its heroine's eventual domestication as the wife of de Becque and the matriarch of his family: but not without first disrupting the musical's narrative line through Nellie's performance of "Honey Bun," a song conceived as a showcase for Martin's charm and virtuosity. Even more so than the earlier *Carousel*, *South Pacific* bears an ambivalent relationship to musical comedy's female carnivalesque, in the figure of Nellie Forbush, as played by the exuberant Martin. The star's persona evoked for critics "a born clown with more than one touch of Venus."[166] Yet in contrast to the wily Ziegfeld Girl Lorelei, Nellie epitomizes the "direct sincerity (and) human simplicity" that *The New York Times'* Lewis Funke located at the heart of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical.[167] As Andrea Most observes of *South Pacific*'s essentialism, "Nellie is straightforward, anti-intellectual, and, ironically, antitheatrical. She refuses to put on an act; she can say (or sing) only what is in her heart."[168]

At the same time, the antitheatrical Nellie *does* put on a theatrical act. In *The Thanksgiving Follies*, a benefit entertainment for the Seabees, Nellie ("billed as Bosun Butch Forbush") choreographs and stars in the show. In "Honey Bun," Nellie dons an oversized sailor suit and raucously dances in male drag as the "pap" to her "baby," Seabee Luther Billis, who is dressed (in ethnic burlesque) as the "Siren of the Coral Sea." As a musical springboard for the androgynous antics of Mary Martin, "Honey Bun" represents an inversion of the gender dynamics of *South Pacific*: not only those of Joe Cable and his "younger than springtime" Polynesian lover Liat, but Emile de Becque and Nellie, who becomes increasingly submissive to Emile after their reconciliation.[169] While Nellie's arc in *South Pacific* admirably moves her from her "carefully taught" provincial bigotry to racial and ethnic tolerance, Nellie also diverts from her earlier path as an adventurous young woman who longs to see the world (and who was billed in her local newspaper as "Arkansas' own Florence Nightingale"). When asked by Emile what she was running away from, Nellie responded:

> It was more like running *to* something. I wanted to see what the world was like—outside Little Rock, I mean. And I wanted to meet different kinds of people and find out if I like them better. And I'm finding out.[170]

Yet naval nurse Nellie—who starts as something of a Rosie the Riveter figure—also becomes increasingly domesticated throughout the course of the show. As Most has written of *South Pacific*'s final scenes, "From the moment Emile asks Nellie to marry him, Emile's (quasi-operatic) musical style will dominate. And, after this moment, whenever they share the stage, Nellie will defer to Emile musically."[171] The final scene, too—a tableau of familial bliss with Nellie, Emile, and the latter's children—conveys an image of domestic subservience: *"The music continues. The children drink their soup. NELLIE comes back to consciousness enough to realize EMILE must be hungry. She leans over and hands him the large bowl of soup with an air of 'nothing's-too-good-for-the-boss!' Then she passes him the soup ladle! But he doesn't use it. Instead, he thrusts his hand forward. NELLIE clasps it. Looking into each other's eyes, they hold this position as the curtain falls."*[172]

As directed by Joshua Logan, who connected scenes through cinematic "quick dissolves," *South Pacific* strove toward even tighter formal integration in its staging than had *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*.[173] "There are no stage numbers or line dancing, no chorus girl lines," Richard Rodgers wrote of the team's goals for *South Pacific*, as if renouncing the conventions of his interwar musicals with Lorenz Hart.[174] At the same time, *South Pacific* evoked unstable and ineradicable tensions between opera and musical theater, musical play and musical comedy, psychological realism and overt theatricality. Two of *South Pacific*'s major characters—Luther Billis and the canny island merchant Bloody Mary—strongly drew from traditions of vaudeville and burlesque (with Bloody Mary, as both older woman and Polynesian Other, essentialized as a *naturally* disruptive female musical body).

By contrast with *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *South Pacific* ultimately rejects the female carnivalesque as it tames its heroine to the ends of feminine domesticity (and, by extension, tames Mary Martin's diva virtuosity to the integrated musical narrative). Echoing Carrie's Broadway extravaganza experience in *Carousel*, Nellie ceases to play the "madcap maiden" as she embraces marriage and motherhood at the side of Emile. Meanwhile, in two 1940s musicals sharing similar creative teams but vastly different approaches to the "household conformability" of women, domesticity itself forms the subject: 1948's *Love Life*, and the earlier 1943 musical *One Touch of Venus*.

"THE TROUBLE WITH WOMEN": FEMALE DOMESTICITY IN *ONE TOUCH OF VENUS* AND *LOVE LIFE*

The year 1947 was an epochal year in the domestic life of America, as Long Island's Levittown was founded as a model suburban community, and set a new ideal of American home life—one contrasting sharply with the urbane ethos of the interwar era. In the same year's best-selling and influential *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, psychoanalysts Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham applauded this renewed return to normalcy and what they called the "back to the country movement":[175]

> The movement of city people to the suburbs and to the country unquestionably expresses deep yearning within many for a way of living other than that afforded by the convenient, laborsaving, efficient and basically unpleasant city apartment and the things that go with it.[176]

This "deep yearning" for a lost way of life infuses 1948's *Love Life*, an innovative "Musical Vaudeville" spanning 150 years of the marriage of archetypal American couple Sam and Susan Cooper. *Love Life* drew strong influence from the pseudo-Freudian theories of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, which, as written against a fractured backdrop of postwar "Atomic Age" malaise, lamented the "destruction of the American home" and the consequent "maladjustment of women" as side effects of the Industrial Revolution.[177] With music by Kurt Weill, and book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner, *Love Life* appeared amid a cycle of postwar musical plays that nostalgically eulogized a lost vision of home, as well as women's domestic role within it: not only *Love Life*, but *Allegro*, with its evocation of modern city life as irredeemably corrupt, and Lerner's own 1947 *Brigadoon*, written with Frederick Loewe, which transports its blasé leading man from Manhattan "sophistication" into an enchanted Scottish highland.

In its attitudes toward the American home and women's domestication, *Love Life* contrasts strikingly with the earlier 1943 musical *One Touch of Venus*. *Love Life* shared much of the same creative team as *One Touch of Venus*: not only composer Weill, but producer Cheryl Crawford and director Elia Kazan (Crawford's former Group Theater collaborator, fresh from his landmark 1947 staging of *A Streetcar Named Desire*). Yet *One Touch of Venus*, a witty wartime musical comedy with lyrics by Ogden Nash, a book cowritten by Nash and S.J. Perelman, and choreography by Agnes de Mille, had taken the opposite approach of *Love Life*, as a satire of suburban conformity in the form of the "humdrum houses" of Ozone Heights.[178] Into this fictional Staten Island suburb (and proto-Levittown), barber Rodney Hatch intends to move his wife-to-be: the Goddess of Love herself. *One Touch of Venus* became a sizable hit at the Imperial Theater, where it achieved a run of 567 performances. Opening six months after *Oklahoma!* (on October 7, 1943), *One Touch of Venus* was compared to the former musical by a number of critics: "*Venus*, like *Oklahoma!*, breaks with musical comedy tradition. But where *Oklahoma!* has the smell of new-mown hay, *Venus* is like a trick perfume. I suppose the simplest way out is to call it sophisticated," noted Louis Kronenberger.[179]

Based on F. Anstey's 1885 novella *The Tinted Venus*, *One Touch of Venus*—with its suggestion of the Pygmalion and Galatea theme—was originally conceived by Weill as a modern "opera comique in the Offenbach line."[180] Instead, Nash and Perelman (who had replaced original librettist Bella Spewack) updated its Victorian setting to wartime Manhattan. Six years before *South Pacific*, *One Touch of Venus* established Mary Martin as a major Broadway star following her breakout role in Cole Porter and the

Spewacks' 1938 *Leave It To Me*, in which Martin had performed her legendary Siberian striptease to "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." The ethos of *One Touch of Venus* mirrors both the songs of Cole Porter (to whom Nash's lyrics were compared) and the works of Anita Loos, in which *eros* is a form of power in a world inequitable to women. Indeed, *One Touch of Venus*'s creators conceived the title role for no less a love goddess than Marlene Dietrich, who reportedly turned down the title role on the grounds of its raciness.[181]

In *One Touch of Venus*, Martin first appeared as a museum statue in collector Jerome Savory's Whitelaw Savory Foundation of Modern Art. This rare "Venus of Anatolia" comes to life and libidinously pursues not Savory (who falls ardently in love with her), but milquetoast barber Rodney Hatch, whom she desires for his very ordinariness ("All my other men have been such heroic figures. I want somebody nobody's ever heard of").[182] Though at one point Venus compares Rodney to "a public notary whose term is about to expire," his functionality excites her.[183] She describes her feelings for Rodney in "That's Him," a sly ballad—from the feminine perspective—of erotic love as utilitarian pleasure. Glamorously costumed by Mainbocher, Martin sang:

> You know the way you feel about the "Rhapsody in Blue?"
> That's him... that's him.
> The way you feel about a hat created just for you?
> That's him... that's him.
> You know the way you feel when fireflies glimmer,
> The way you feel when overnight your hips grow slimmer?
> Wonderful world, wonderful you,
> That's him... that's him.[184]

By contrast with the divided (and mortal) Liza Elliott in Weill's earlier *Lady in the Dark*, Venus presides as the ultimate enchantress. Exuding glamour and power as both an irresistible siren and Olympian Boss Lady, Venus's confidence confounds psychoanalysts.[185] Yet in *One Touch of Venus*, too, the title character must make a Choice: not between romantic and professional success, but between divine and domestic callings, as Rodney tempts Venus to renounce her amorous philosophy (she believes in love not as the "distant moan of a violin" but the "triumphant twang of a bedspring").[186] He urges Venus to settle down with him in Ozone Heights:

VENUS: Rodney, I hope I'll be the right kind of wife for you.
RODNEY: Why shouldn't you be?
VENUS: I can't sew, or weave, or milk a goat.
RODNEY: When I get through with you, you'll be an A Number One homebody.[187]

One Touch of Venus's title character is a Greco-Roman deity and not an American working woman, along the lines of *On the Town*'s industrious New York broads. Nevertheless, Venus—who ultimately tires of Rodney's conformity and soars back to her fuller existence on Mt. Olympus—would likely have evoked to audiences the independence of Rosie the Riveter, as "an allegory for the emancipated, American, urbane female of the 1940s."[188]

In fact, the story of *One Touch of Venus* also resonated against the personal biography and marital conflicts of its choreographer Agnes de Mille, who won acclaim for *Venus'* two ballets: "Ten Minutes for Lunch" (centering on an *On the Town*-esque pas de deux between a sailor and a salesgirl), and the satirically mythical "Venus in Ozone Heights." In her memoir *And Promenade Home*, de Mille extensively details the dilemmas she experienced in her wartime marriage to soldier Walter Prude (a concert manager by profession), who was adored by his wife even as he fiercely resented her artistic and professional success. During the run of *One Touch of Venus*, de Mille discussed with *Venus*'s great German-born female arranger, Trude Rittmann, her own struggle to "make up her mind":

> "If I could choose," I continued, pacing up and down, "If I could live one way or another, cut my pattern clean—be like other women, simply a wife or mother, or like great artists, sure and undivided. But all parts of me are set against each other."[189]

In *And Promenade Home*, de Mille recounts her time (after *Venus* opened to Broadway success) living with Prude on an isolated military base in rural California. Despite de Mille's conviction of being "no housekeeper at all," she struggled to play "A Number One homebody" for Prude, only to fail miserably at baking a pie and earning the mockery of her housemates, including one domestic goddess named Mrs. Bluntly.[190] Quoting her husband, de Mille wrote:

> "Mrs. Bluntly has intimidated my wife," Walter explained. "Mrs. Bluntly has been able to do what the organized theater has not. She has reduced my wife to a whimpering neurotic."[191]

Yet for all her arguments with Prude, de Mille—who never divorced Prude—refused to surrender to her husband's wishes. Alluding to Coleridge's poem "Kublai Khan," de Mille mused:

> I had drunk the Milk of Paradise and known power. I could not think to give this up. I could forfeit my life, and my comfort, riches and convenience, for love—but not the magic release of work! This was my identity.[192]

While it would be misleading and reductive to read *One Touch of Venus* as a simple allegory of the marriage of Agnes de Mille to Walter Prude, the musical presents striking parallels between Venus and de Mille, as extraordinary females pressured into domestic conformity. In marked contrast to many postwar musical plays, *One Touch of Venus* bristles with caustic satire against the rising popularity of suburban domestic life—epitomized by Rodney with his "clockwork" punctuality and unwavering habit of reading *Dick Tracy* comics (the same favorite comic strip as *Kiss Me, Kate*'s Harrison Howell, of whom Rodney is a younger and more handsome variant).[193] In one exchange, Rodney imagines Venus and himself as "an old married couple—just like Blondie and Dagwood," as he tells her about Ozone Heights:

> RODNEY: It's a great big new real estate development over on Staten Island. Every bungalow's just the same. They got an electric incinerator and a radio that looks like a fireplace—
> VENUS: And a fireplace that looks like a radio?
> RODNEY: Yes, and when you sign the lease, you get a year's subscription to *Reader's Digest*.[194]

The wartime *One Touch of Venus,* guided by the urbane sensibility of *New Yorker* regulars Nash and Perelman, used Greek mythology to satirize the American myth of suburban domesticity and its constraints upon American women. Increasingly dismayed at the prospect of trading her goddess's glory for life as Mrs. Rodney Hatch, Venus is drawn into a dream ballet of sorts: de Mille's "Venus in Ozone Heights" (which de Mille biographer Carol Easton has called "Venus Makes Up Her Mind").[195] As the stage directions in the original libretto describe the ballet, in which Dionysus, Diana, nymphs, and satyrs filled the stage:

> *(The lights fade, the hotel room disappears. As the lights come on again, we see three identical suburban doorways. VENUS, in housewifely garments, is seated in front of the center doorway, caught in her own conception of domesticity).*

> *(The life of Ozone Heights closes in on her—the neighbors, the children; RODNEY dividing his attention between the lawnmower and the comics. Stealthily, the creatures of her magic world invade the scene. She resists them, but they will not be resisted; now Ancient Greece is real, and Ozone Heights the myth. RODNEY vanishes, the humdrum houses vanish, only the vast open sky remains. VENUS, once again the goddess, returns to her people).*[196]

The original out-of-town ending of the ballet left Rodney standing "forlorn and alone onstage" without Venus. Instead, de Mille suggested a more sentimental conclusion for the Broadway opening: Venus sends a duplicate of herself—a girl "who might be Venus' country cousin"—down to Rodney, who learns that she hails from Ozone Heights. Rodney asks her, "Do you like it there?," and she responds, "I wouldn't think of living anyplace else."[197]

In direct contrast with *One Touch of Venus,* 1948's *Love Life* embraced the myth of a pure American home destroyed by the advent of modern industry. *Time*'s reviewer observed, "*Love Life*'s argument is that steam, speed, materialism, and greed have slowly wrecked connubiality."[198] Similarly, *Boston Daily Globe* critic Cyrus Durgin noted the recurrent gender war theme: "The battle of the sexes receives another going over in *Love Life*."[199] While *One Touch of Venus* can be considered essentially a musical comedy, even with its Weill music and de Mille ballets, *Love Life* was conceived as a thematically unified musical play, albeit in the episodic form of "a musical vaudeville." As Wolfe Kaufman described *Love Life*'s narrative use of variety theater:

> Sandwiched in between all these (scenes) is every kind of vaudeville stunt the authors could dream up—a quartette, a magician, madrigal singers, a trapeze artist, a tightrope walker, minstrels, and so on. But the whole thing has one continuous line which progresses the story of the two main characters, Susan and Sam Cooper. Never are we permitted to forget, or neglect them.[200]

As directed by Kazan and produced by Crawford ("Broadway's most active lady producer of musicals"),[201] with music by Weill and book and lyrics by Lerner, *Love Life* opened at the 46th Street Theatre on October 7, 1948. The musical played a run of 252 performances and heatedly divisive reviews, though almost all critics were rapturous about Weill's score: "He (Weill) has never composed a more versatile score with agreeable music in so many moods—hot, comic, blue, satiric, and romantic," wrote Brooks Atkinson.[202] Contemporary theater scholars laud *Love Life* (along with

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Allegro*) for not only its influence upon the Sondheim-era "concept musical," but for its startlingly iconoclastic form.

An intimate pageant of American history, *Love Life* revolves around the marriage of archetypal American couple Susan (Nanette Fabray) and Sam Cooper (Ray Middleton, who originated Frank Butler in *Annie Get Your Gun*). The Coopers progress, without aging, across the course of 150 years—from post-Revolutionary America to 1948 (one critic noted *Love Life*'s resemblance, in this sense, to Thornton Wilder's epoch-spanning 1942 play *The Skin of Our Teeth,* also a Kazan production).[203] In a musical influenced by Weill's German collaboration with Bertolt Brecht, the authors interspersed the book scenes with ironic, commentative vaudeville numbers such as "Economics" and "Progress," in which an octet of "Go-Getters" mused of the replacement of "love and home" by capitalist striving.

Yet if diverse experiments in theatrical modernism, as well as tropes from American vaudeville, helped inspire the form of *Love Life*, the show's content appears undoubtedly influenced by *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, and the tenets of Freudian ego psychology with which Lundberg and Farnham intertwine their arguments. *Modern Woman* sold millions of copies and wielded wide cultural influence, even as it earned harsh criticism from readers ranging from Margaret Mead to Dorothy Parker.[204] In the book, Lundberg and Farnham chronicle "the destruction of the home" in American life as "the immediate outcome" of the Industrial Revolution, which they claim pushed husbands and fathers into the factories, and consequently, impelled women misguidedly to follow men into the work force.[205] According to Lundberg and Farnham, women created their own "masculinity complexes" by straying "off the female road of nurture" onto "the essentially male road of exploit":[206]

> Her framework of emotional security gone with the destruction of the home, her readjustment to the environment increasingly taking the form of emulating men, particularly in aggressive striving, the modern woman was, more than she realized, renouncing her womanhood on the sexual level itself. She could neither love nor inspire love.[207]

The themes of *Love Life* closely echo the arguments of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*. The musical begins in 1821 in the New England village of Mayville, Connecticut, where Sam and Susan live an idyllic agrarian life with their children. The onset of the Industrial Revolution interrupts their

happy family life circa 1857, as Sam is constantly away from home in his job as a railroad worker. In response, Susan displaces her marital loneliness into involvement with the suffragette movement, leading Women's Rights meetings as the couple reaches the 1890s.

The rapid pace of modernization increasingly disrupts Sam and Susan's marriage into the Jazz Age and contemporary era, as Susan begins to earn more money than Sam (now a bank functionary) in her work as a businesswoman. "Damn flunky is all I am around here," Sam complains.[208] Echoing *Love Life*'s magic-show opening image, which showed Sam levitating and Susan sawed in half as "half homemaker, half breadwinner," the musical's last image shows Sam and Susan walking toward each other on a tightrope, with Sam urging Susan, "I'll meet you halfway."[209] While *Love Life* mirrors *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*'s malaise with industrial capitalist society, Lerner's libretto also echoes its Freudian discourse of anxiety, neurosis, and hysteria. In *Modern Woman*, Lundberg and Farnham blasted "the super-jittery age in which we live."[210] Similarly, Lerner's witty lyrics in "Ho, Billy O!, A Modern Madrigal" lament:

> Said Billy, "Boy, we're up the creek,
> The world is too despotic.
> We've disinherited the meek,
> And so we're all neurotic."[211]

Love Life also evokes *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* in its portrayal of Susan's feminism, and then career, as corrosive toxins in the marriage. In multiple scenes and musical numbers (such as Susan's lament, "Is It Him or Is It Me?"), *Love Life* implies the wife's folly. The first of these numbers, "Mother's Getting Nervous," was staged as a commentative vaudeville interlude sung by the couple's three children. It follows Sam's departure from Susan to pursue his new job with the railroad business, as the couple decides to delay having another child due to Sam's intense travel itinerary, and Susan confronts "endless lonely evenings."[212] The staging of the number unveiled "a woman on a trapeze," performing restless leaps and stunts, as the children sang: "Mother's life is boring/She's all in a world of her own/She's up in the air/And starting to wobble/In fact she is feeling/Quite miserobble." One of the children then hands the woman on the trapeze a copy of "Woman's Rights by Susan B. Anthony:" a visual metaphor for Susan's emerging feminism.[213]

Two scenes later, the time has jumped to 1894, and Susan is organizing meetings for the "Women's Club, Local Branch," where she hosts her girlfriends "all dressed up in the severe style of the suffragettes."[214] In "Women's Club Blues," Susan and the ladies sing that, "The time has come to redirect our passion," as Lerner plays upon multiple puns and double entrendres linking the women's political commitment as suffragettes to their sexual frustration as women whose husbands are away working (echoing Lundberg and Farnham's observations about female frigidity due to the "masculinization of women").[215] As Susan sings in "Women's Club Blues":

> I've got a mouth as red as roses,
> Crimson red as roses,
> Hardly ever touched at all.
> But from now on
> I want to use it.
> I'm gonna use it
> To shout in every public meeting and hall.
> And when the moon is out at night,
> I start to dream about the right
> To work![216]

Elsewhere in *Love Life,* Weill and Lerner evoke male vulnerabilities corresponding to the shattered heroism of World War II. Among the several numbers cut during *Love Life*'s out-of-town tryout was the musical scene "The Locker Room." In a considerably more nuanced and insightful manner than "Women's Club Blues," "The Locker Room" dramatizes the psychological frailties of Sam Cooper and his male friends as they put on a show of masculine bravado for each other in the location of the title. With his new librettist, Weill revisited themes familiar from *One Touch of Venus,* a musical comedy that, even as it extols the erotic power of Venus, satirizes male anxieties about women as both vixens and "ill-favored shrews" (as Savory calls his acerbic secretary Molly Grant).[217] *Venus*'s male comic quartet "The Trouble with Women" catalogues the numerous ways in which women pop the bubble of "bursting masculine pride." Nash's lyrics ultimately conclude, "The trouble with women is men."[218]

The deflation of the male ego more earnestly informs "The Locker Room," in which Sam and his cronies—complaining about their domineering working wives—assert in the song's chorus, "We're the sexiest men you can find/But all of it's here in the mind."[219] Throughout the song, Sam and his friends evoke a litany of masculine crisis: "When as a father, you're a bloody failure/When you're ignored as leader of the clan/Where can you come and still have people hail yer?/To the locker room."[220] Lamenting fallen mythologies of male virility and heroism, the men boast to each other that they can "walk around like Hercules and Atlas," despite a very different reality in their home lives and marriages.[221] As a "quartet forms and sings nostalgically":

> In our misty mountain retreat,
> Where we go ev'ry weekend to cheat;
> There we're cozy and warm,
> Far from the marital storm,
> With the fields made for meand'ring
> And the cabins for philand'ring.
> Take me back to that hill of delight
> Where a man can be a king for a night.
> Bless that hideaway where we go
> To repair our crippled ego.[222]

Without "The Locker Room," then, *Love Life* loses much of its resonant power to explore the postwar male psyche and the "crippled egos" of American men (subjects that Lerner continued to explore, with greater nuance, in his musicals of the 1950s and 1960s). Despite its brilliant score and innovative conceptual daring, *Love Life* remains steeped in the postwar psychoanalytic misogyny of *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (although, with the possibility of a revised libretto and the excision of numbers like "Women's Club Blues," new productions might restore *Love Life* to the repertory and preserve its place as one of the most significant Broadway musicals of the mid-twentieth century).[223]

Weill's 1941 musical had earlier conjured the Goddess of Love, through the words of Liza Elliott, and it is *Lady in the Dark* with which this chapter concludes. In the ballad "This is New," Liza sings, "This is new/Is it Venus insisting/That I'm through/With the shadowy past?"[224] Prefiguring the psychological acrobatics of *Love Life*'s Susan Cooper, Liza dreams of performing feats of "Mental Tight Rope Walking," suspended between the poles of the "executive and the enchantress."[225] Along with Elmer Rice's 1945 play *Dream Girl,* a work strongly influenced by the Weill–Gershwin–Hart musical, *Lady in the Dark* drew upon the writings of Sigmund Freud himself. In the psychosexual dream circuses of *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl,* benighted heroines "must make a decision" about not only whom to love, but what woman to be.

THE THEME OF THE THREE CASKETS IN *LADY IN THE DARK* AND *DREAM GIRL*

"Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours/Is now converted."—Portia to Bassanio, in Act 3, Scene 2 of The Merchant of Venice, *c. 1598*[226]

In the middle of *Lady in the Dark's* second dream sequence—a nightmare of impending marriage to her longtime paramour Kendall Nesbitt—Liza Elliott recalls a pantomimed "little school play" which she was to have acted in as a child. This "little musical Cinderella play" had been entitled "The Princess of Pure Delight."[227] Realizing that her adult life is echoed in the plot of the childhood pageant, Liza remembers being cast in the title role of a princess "secretly in love with a minstrel."[228]

In "The Princess of Pure Delight," the king has promised his daughter's hand to the one of the three princes (in orange, in blue, and in lavender) who can correctly answer a sorcerer's riddle.[229] Of the three, the minstrel answers correctly and wins the Princess's hand, leading her onward to a happily-ever-after.[230] Liza later recognizes that the minstrel corresponds, in her waking life, to the brash, swaggering advertising editor Charley Johnson. This is the hidden suitor with whom Liza has not known she was in love, and who is able to put her "world in tune" by completing the forgotten lyrics of a childhood song: *Lady in the Dark's* haunting dream motif of "My Ship."

In fact, both "The Princess of Pure Delight" and *Lady in the Dark* itself correspond closely to Freud's influential 1913 essay "The Theme of the Three Caskets," which also served as a direct inspiration for Elmer Rice's *Dream Girl.* Starring Gertrude Lawrence, *Lady in the Dark* debuted in 1941 as a serious and scintillating "musical play." By contrast, *Dream Girl,* starring Betty Field, opened in 1945 as a fanciful romantic comedy, not a musical. Yet the works share much in common, including spectacular original productions with elaborate dream sequences, visualized through the respective turntables of designers Harry Horner and Jo Mielziner. Both shows, too, involved the dramatic alternation of workplace reality with dream and fantasy, while offering virtuosic star turns for Lawrence and Field, as the respective "neurotic lady" heroines.[231]

Both shows found great critical and commercial success, as *Lady in the Dark,* with music by Weill, lyrics by Ira Gershwin, and a book by Moss Hart, opened at the Alvin Theater on September 2, 1941, for a run of 467 performances. *Variety* called the genre-bending show (and, like *Love Life,* proto-concept musical), "the most lavish and beautiful entertainment

to reach Broadway in many seasons."[232] Many critics, ecstatic about Lawrence's Liza, hailed *Lady in the Dark* as a milestone Broadway musical in the originality of both its writing and production. By contrast, *Dream Girl,* which opened at the Coronet Theatre on Dec. 14, 1945, ran for 348 performance and was compared to both *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* and *Lady in the Dark* by critics, who largely considered the play a charming and literate theatrical lark on the part of Rice (who wrote the play as a star vehicle for Field, his wife).[233]

Both plays, too, drew upon the currents of 1940s ego psychology that became most pronounced in American cultural discourse after the close of World War II. *Lady in the Dark* was inspired by Hart's own years of psychoanalytic treatment with Dr. Gregory Zillboorg, and from 1937 on, with Dr. Stanley Kubie (as Hart strove to treat the depression stemming, in part, from his closeted homosexuality). In both *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl,* the title heroines—respectively, "Boss Lady" Liza Elliott and daydreaming bookshop owner Georgina Allerton—are made to confront "reality" in the form of their biological destiny (and sexual submission) as women. This reality comes embodied in the Petruchio-esque figure of a dominating man: respectively, *Lady in the Dark's* Charley Johnson and *Dream Girl's* Clark Redfield.

Yet the heroine's choice remains hidden, and in both *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl,* the heroine must first "make up her mind" from among three princes, corresponding to Freud's notion of the three caskets. In the essay, Freud considered the symbolic and mythic significance of Portia's suitors' choosing among the three caskets in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* in which the Prince of Morocco chooses the gold casket (containing a death's head), the Prince of Arragon the silver casket (containing a fool's head), and the noble Bassanio makes the right choice of the lead casket (containing a portrait of Portia, whose hand he wins). Also considering the casket theme's origins in folklore—including the medieval Roman tale in the *Gesta Romanorum*—Freud suggests that, in the psychoanalytic terms of dreams (in which "caskets are also women, symbols of what is essential in woman, and therefore of a woman herself"), *The Merchant of Venice* shows not a woman choosing between three men, but of a "man's choice between three women."[234]

Moss Hart adapted a version of the *Gesta Romanorum* story into *I Am Listening,* the source play that became *Lady in the Dark.*[235] The musical alternates between Dr. Brooks' office and Liza's magazine office, between the fantasy-laden reality of *Allure* and the surreal visions of her dreams, as Liza consults Dr. Brooks to get to the heart of her melancholic "sickness."

Lady in the Dark echoes the *Gesta Romanorum* tale, in which a shipwrecked princess chooses between a casket of gold ("what she deserves"), silver ("what her nature desires"), and lead ("what God hath disposed"), choosing lead and winning the Emperor's son.

Similarly, *Lady in the Dark* dramatizes the caskets as the three men in Liza's life, with Charley the eventual choice. Liza selects Charley above her longtime paramour Kendall Nesbitt, the 48-year-old backer of *Allure Magazine*, who stands in for the gold of the deserved (or obligatory) mate; and "glamour-boy" movie star Randy Curtis standing in for the desired silver. Yet Hart conceived the three men in terms of divided aspects of Liza's inner self and her negated femininity, brought about by childhood traumas (rejection by her parents as an "ugly duckling," and then by an adolescent crush, who leaves her for a prettier girl). As Kubie wrote in his preface to *Lady in the Dark*, which he called a "Song of Songs of Woman":

> She (Liza) plays out this aspect of her problem against the relatively inert images of three men and what they represent to her.... Superficially viewed, the struggle is over these three men. In reality it is wholly within herself.[236]

Kubie explains how Kendall ("the fantasy of a father and mother rolled into one") and Randy (with his "pseudo-virilism") cannot satisfy Liza's need for a man to dominate her: "The ultimate man is the one who refuses to play the role either of the subservient parent or of the submissive child, and who, by his outrageous mockery and overt erotic foolery, challenges her right to live in her no-man's land between the sexes."[237]

Hart portrays the driving power of Liza's "Boss Lady" as fundamentally incompatible with the glamour of the enchantress whom Liza subconsciously longs to be. "Why do you think you continually dream this fantasy, and yet never attempt to act it out in your conscious life?" Dr. Brooks interrogates Liza.[238] The question echoes Dr. Kubie's own comments in the preface, that "the world called (Liza's drive) ambition and the creative impulse; but in her illness it becomes evident that it was a blind compulsive flight... her Pyrrhic victory left her empty-handed."[239]

As *Lady in the Dark* collides Liza's dream life with the image of Liza as "dream girl," the show's three oneiric sequences also evoke another trio: the aspects of the Freudian subconscious. As a projection of Liza's ego, the Glamour Dream revolves around Liza's self-image. The sequence culminates with Charley, portrayed in dream language as a marine, painting

the picture of a dream-Liza. The picture is unveiled showing Liza, not as the dazzling "Girl of the Moment," but "as she appeared in the doctor's office—austere, somewhat forbidding, and entirely without glamour."[240]

By contrast, "The Wedding Dream" (which recalls the constantly thwarted dream weddings of *Peggy-Ann*) dramatizes Liza's superego. Obligated to marry Kendall, who has successfully petitioned his wife for a divorce, Liza dreams that her classmates at Mapleton High are celebrating her impending wedding. The festivities are interrupted by Liza's memory of "The Princess of Pure Delight," as well as a sensual dance with Randy Curtis (to whom she sings "This is New"), only to dissolve in a "cacophonous musical nightmare" as Liza marches down the aisle.[241]

The final Circus Dream, stimulated by Liza's inability to "decide between (*Allure*'s) Easter cover or the circus cover," conjures a gaudy phantasmagoria of the Id. Amid a melee of tumblers, clowns, and acrobats, Liza finds herself presented as a sort of feminine freak show: "Liza Elliott's Gargantuan Three Ring Circus/Featuring for the First Time/The Captivating and Tantalizing Liza Elliott/The Woman Who Cannot Make Up Her Mind."[242] Charley morphs into the prosecuting attorney against Liza, as the dream condenses the settings of circus and courtroom. Liza defends herself by performing "The Saga of Jenny," a dynamite burlesque striptease recounting the "story of the girl without inhibitions."[243] The dream ends with musical fragments of "My Ship," as the chorus mockingly chants to Liza, "Make up your mind." They taunt her, "You're afraid of that music, aren't you? Just as you're afraid to marry Kendall Nesbitt—afraid to be the woman you want to be—afraid, afraid, afraid!"[244]

Cinderella mythologies pervade *Lady in the Dark*, in which Dr. Brooks functions as Freudian fairy godfather. These fantasies are conjured in the gorgeous *Allure* models that surround Liza, and in the guise of the enchantress and the princess of pure delight. Liza's metamorphoses unfold upon the shifting stages of her dreams, even as she ultimately makes the ultimate transformation to a feminine and glamorous woman under Charley Johnson's taming. In Liza's "Glamour Dream," she appears wearing the red hair and blue dress of her dead mother, "a legendary beauty" who had told her (as recalled to Dr. Brooks' in Liza's childhood flashback), "I'm afraid you're never going to be able to wear blue, my darling."[245]

By contrast, Georgina Allerton—the daydreaming young heroine of Rice's *Dream Girl*—never attains the status of "Boss Lady." A crush on her brother-in-law primarily afflicts Georgina, a "chain-smoker of aromatic fantasies."[246] While listening to the radio psychoanalyst Dr. Percival

("brought to you by Kellogg's Kidney Capsules"), Georgina claims that she is "having a psychosis."[247] Yet *Dream Girl* presents its heroine merely as a self-dramatizing 23-year-old virgin, gone neurotic on the brink of womanhood. With her friend Claire, Georgina runs the Mermaid Bookshop. However, the shop is failing due to not carrying enough copies of the steamy, period potboiler *Always Opal*, whose uninhibited "yes-woman" heroine Georgina subconsciously desires to be more like.[248] Georgina, too, aspires to be a novelist, though Rice portrays Georgina's literary ambitions as comparable to his heroine's daydreams: as a vain, girlish fancy. Georgina gushes:

> Maybe Wentworth and Jones will accept my novel. . . . Wouldn't that be wonderful! With a published novel, I'd really be somebody. Reviews in all the book sections; royalty checks coming in; women nudging each other at Schrafft's and whispering, "Don't look now, but that girl over there—the one with the smart hat—that's Georgina Allerton, the novelist.[249]

Evoking *Lady in the Dark*, *Dream Girl* intersperses Georgina's domestic and work life at the Mermaid Bookshop with a medley of her all-consuming daydreams. In them, her lawyer father appears in various roles of authority (i.e., a judge, an obstetrician, a justice of the peace), while Georgina's three suitors—all literary men—also appear in various guises. In her daydreams, Georgina imagines herself in roles including the defendant in a murder trial; as a streetwalker in "Joyland;" and, finally, playing Portia (as the "doctor of laws") in the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, which Georgina daydreams while watching the casket scene in a Broadway production of *Merchant*.

This latter fantasy—of acting one of Shakespeare's most self-activated heroines—pushes Georgina to "make up her mind" among her three suitors. She decides to submit to virile Clark Redfield, "the boorish and conceited newspaperman" (in Georgina's words) who closely recalls Charley Johnson.[250] "You live in a world of fantasy, instead of the world of reality," Clark tells Georgina, who ultimately leaves her career aspirations behind in exchange for sex, marriage, and motherhood.[251] The final scene portrays Georgina joyously calling her parents to announce her marriage, having just eloped with Clark to Greenwich, Connecticut. The curtain falls on Georgina's wedding night; the dream girl a 23-year-old virgin no more.

As with *Lady in the Dark*, *Dream Girl*—with its climactic play-within-a play performance of *The Merchant of Venice*—derives its romantic plot

from the theme of the three caskets. Georgina struggles to choose among three literary men: Clark (a book critic-turned-sportscaster), book jobber George Hand, and her brother-in-law Jim Lucas, a reader for Wentworth and Jones, unhappily married to Georgina's sister Lucy. Georgina's suitors can also be compared to those of Liza Elliott. While Clark corresponds to Charley, George Hand (who is married and "getting on to 40") resembles a more virile Kendall Nesbitt, and "balmy dreamer" Jim Lucas corresponds to *Lady*'s submissive cowboy, Randy Curtis. In the case of both *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl*, the heroine makes the symbolic choice of the lead casket.

In "The Theme of the Three Caskets," Freud writes of lead—as personified by Portia's choice in *The Merchant of Venice*, and in "three sisters" myths like *Cinderella*—as redolent of certain dream symbols. According to Freud, the qualities of lead signify pallor, "dumbness" (or muteness), and "hiding and being unfindable—a thing which confronts the prince in the fairy tale of Cinderella three times."[252] Both *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl* renegotiate the themes of "The Theme of Three Caskets," so that the title heroine of each work embraces a kind of muteness in her choosing of love, in the respective lead caskets of Charley Johnson and Clark Redfield. In *Dream Girl*, in which women's careers are suggested as daydreaming, both George Hand and Clark are condescending toward Georgina's bookshop business:

> HAND: I don't think you're cut out for a business career.
> GEORGINA: That's what my partner says. But what career *am* I cut out for?
> HAND: Have you tried love?
> GEORGINA: You won't take me seriously, will you?
> HAND: Sure, if I can't have you any other way.[253]

It is Clark, however, who truly dashes Georgina's ambitions. He not only derides her as "the college grad who plays at running a bookshop," but calls her novel "a piece of tripe."[254] In one of the early dream sequences, Georgina had daydreamed of being on trial for murdering Clark. Jim Lucas appeared as her defense attorney, claiming Georgina's self-defense: "For what was this novel of hers, that Clark Redfield sought to annihilate with the cruel strokes of his sharp-edged tongue and stabbing wit? It was her baby, ladies and gentlemen."[255] (Georgina's novel as her misbegotten baby also recalls *Lady in the Dark*, and Charley's charge to Liza: "You have magazines instead of babies").[256] In making up her mind to choose Clark,

Georgina allows him to silence her burgeoning literary voice, even as the newspaper man proclaims: "There is no such thing as an abstract discussion between a man and a woman."[257]

In *Lady in the Dark*, a similar transformation takes over Liza, whom Hart doubles throughout the musical with the mute images of mirrors and mannequins (see Figure 3.3):

> The office is empty at the moment, except for a life-sized dummy, which stands almost in the center of the room, magnificently clothed in full evening dress, and looking astonishingly like Greta Garbo.[258]

At the conclusion of act one, Liza—asked on date to the Stork Club by Randy Curtis—sets about to transform herself into an enchantress, a

Figure 3.3 Mirrors and mannequins: Gertrude Lawrence as Liza Elliott, with *Allure* dummy, in *Lady in the Dark*. Courtesy of Photofest.

self-willed Cinderella going to the ball. Randy wishes for Liza to go as her austere self ("I'm up to my hips in glamour most of the time," he sighs).[259] Instead, Liza disrobes two dummies from her office, taking from them a jeweled lamé evening gown, an evening cape, and shoes. Like the melody of "My Ship," these dummies—and their evocation of the glamour girl—haunt Liza in *Lady in the Dark*. The last image in the musical illustrates Liza "knowing all the words" to the forgotten tune of "My Ship," which she sings in blissful surrender with Charley. At the same time, Liza relinquishes her voice as editor, as she offers eventually to "step down" for the new boss.[260]

The conflict of *Lady in the Dark* hinges on Liza's inability to make a decision—between the circus cover and the Easter cover; among Charley, Kendall, and Randy; and ultimately, "as to the kind of woman she wants to be." Yet the contradictory nature of the theatrical dreams themselves undermines the Freudian essentialism at the heart of the show. In *On Dreams*, his 1914 abridgement of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud noted, "The alternative 'either-or is never expressed in dreams, both of the alternatives being inserted in the text of the dream as though they were equally valid. I have already mentioned that an 'either-or' used in *recording* a dream is to be translated by an 'and.'"[261] In production and performance, *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl* theatricalize the inclusive "and," even as their authors insist on the narrative "or."

In the respective theatrical panoramas of *Lady in the Dark* and *Dream Girl*, Liza and Georgina take on a dizzying array of dream personae—fantastical tour de forces magnified in the original productions by the leading ladies' virtuosity. The theatrical dreams in *Lady in the Dark* magnify the principles of women's musical theater performance elaborated by Stacy Wolf: "In many cases, through music and dancing and staging and scenography, what happens in the performance contradicts what happens in the dramatic text."[262] Critics of both shows frequently used variations of "running the gamut" in describing the performances of Lawrence and Field. Richard Watts, Jr. raved of Lawrence in *Lady in the Dark*, "Miss Lawrence has an opportunity to do some of the most spectacular gamut-running in modern stage history.... Whether singing, dancing, playing emotional scenes, doing comedy or indulging in a bit of strip tease, she is the wonder girl of the drama season."[263] Similarly, *Time*'s critic observed of Field in *Dream Girl*, "In one of the longest roles on record, crammed with quick-changes of costume and quicker ones of character, Field... shows astonishing verve and versatility."[264] Formally contradicting their own essentialist Freudian themes and narratives, both shows—through

performance—celebrate and exult in the theatricality and "infinite variety" of their dreaming ladies (to quote another Shakespeare play: *Antony and Cleopatra*).

In its own gamut of ambitious and professional heroines, the Broadway musicals of the 1940s offer a powerful World War II–era transformation of the Cinderella motif. Rosie the Riveter-themed shows like *Bloomer Girl* and *On the Town* vibrantly celebrated working women, even as musicals like *Lady in the Dark, Annie Get Your Gun,* and *Kiss Me, Kate* both invoked and contradicted the postwar "taming" of the Boss Lady. In the next decade of the 1950s, the pendulum would swing even further in the direction of women's domestication and widespread social conservatism, embracing what Betty Friedan termed, in 1963, the Feminine Mystique (a constellation of mythologies critically satirized and subverted in numerous 1950s musicals). At the same time, the figure of Cinderella will split into a new dialectic of class, sex, and economics: that of the princess and the prostitute.

4. Twentieth-Century Fairy Tales: Princesses, Prostitutes, and the Feminine Mystique in the Broadway Musicals of the 1950s

In April 19, 1956, after four giddy days of "public displays, fireworks, royal salutes, and dancing in the streets," in a Monte Carlo flooded with over 70,000 photographers, paparazzi, movie stars, and Monegasques, Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier III in the royal wedding extravaganza of the century.[1] Wearing an exquisite lace and taffeta gown with a 25 foot-long train, the Philadelphia-born "screen-star daughter of an American bricklayer-turned-millionaire" glided majestically down the aisle of St. Nicholas Cathedral and accepted both her royal spouse and title: Her Serene Highness Princess Grace of Monaco.[2] For months prior to the wedding, Hollywood and the media had concocted a feverish atmosphere of fairy tale fantasy, with even Kelly's MGM star vehicles capitalizing on the mania: the Philadelphia Main Line-set musical *High Society* and *The Swan*, in which Kelly played a princess.[3] As *The New York Times* noted a week before the royal wedding: "Graustark was a fictional principality (in Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*), but there are a few places on earth that have some degree of Graustark about them. Such a grand, improbable, and unusual place is Monaco, where a week from this Wednesday, a Cinderella pageant (with a modern mink-and-Cadillac flourish) is to unfold."[4]

As the press rhapsodized of Hollywood's "Gold-Plated Cinderella" (even as many reporters, and George Jean Nathan, cynically referenced Kelly's rags-to-riches credentials), creators of Broadway musicals, too, found both romantic and satiric inspiration in Monaco's jet-set Graustark.[5] In the Lindsay–Crouse musical comedy, *Happy Hunting*, which opened in December 1956, Ethel Merman starred as Liz Livingston, a social-climbing Philadelphia matron, who, failing to receive an invitation to the