Women at the Workplace: Gender Performativity in Laura Wade's Home I'm Darling

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Diplomski sveučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti; smjer: znanstveni (dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2024.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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Zadar, 17. srpnja 2024.

Table of Contents

1.Introduction

Theatre has always been a place of performance. Actors, by taking on specific roles, embody different personalities, but also play out societal norms, constructs and convictions. By seeing actors perform, the audience is placed as an observer and invited to reflect on what is presented. By doing so, theatre has the power to disrupt society's disregard of certain societal problems. In a way, theatre takes us from being unaware actors in our own lives and gives us the opportunity to observe what our acting contributes to creating. Theatre plays as a text form are specific because that's exactly what they aim to do – not only produce a social critique through reading, but having the text turn into a live performance and have it face the audience. *Home, I'm Darling* is a play in which its characters play their gender roles at home and at work. By having this play presented and actors perform it in front of us, the audience, it makes us reflect on how much gender itself really is a performance. Having that step back gives us the opportunity to see how heavily it is influenced by social norms, our own bias and opinions of others. Furthermore, it makes one think – if it is a script someone acts, is it possible to "create our own script" of what gender is for us as individuals? How do we perform gender every day in interactions with others, just like the characters in *Home, I'm Darling?*

Wade's play *Home I'm Darling* was chosen for the analysis part of this thesis as it presents us with an extreme version of gender performativity – the main characters, Judy and Johnny, are trying to live out a 50ies marital fantasy in the 21st century. However, by providing us with a seemingly exaggerated performance of one's gender, Wade cleverly turns the mirror towards the audience. At first, one can think that this could never be them or what the characters are doing is too much or laughable. However, as the play progresses, we see all the elements of gender performativity that we get to witness everyday around us. What started as something unrelatable makes us realize how much in fact the topic of gender performativity is embedded into our own lives. Just like the actors playing Judy and Johnny, we are also actors, performing our own gender every day on society's stage.

Furthermore, by doing this, Wade allows us to see how what may seem as small, individualistic actions, is affected by multiple societal factors. This thesis focuses on gender performativity of women in the context of the workplace, including both domestic

work and careerism. This play allows us to observe class as a factor – how much is having the option to be a domestic wife a privilege, what is the financial burden of not having both partners work in the 21st century, is placing a complaint at work really an option if it means losing financial stability, etc. The workplace as a setting also allows us to observe power dynamics based on class and gender. To continue, *Home, I'm Darling* shows the audience how social norms and constructs of what it means to be a man or a woman negatively impact both. Although one could consider modern society to be far from the 50ies Johnny and Judy are trying to live out, many of its negative aspects are to be observed in the 21st century as well – from sexual assault at work, derogatory language towards women, men struggling to be "men enough". We see through the characters how patriarchal society forms one's idea of what gender is and how, if that is not obeyed, it results in punishment and comments rooted in misogyny and sexism. By providing multiple examples of what the consequences can be of blindly performing one's gender based on what one thinks is expected of them, Wade warns us how it can lead to us not feeling like ourselves anymore. This play allows us to see gender as a complex construct impacted by multiple factors.

This master thesis will therefore firstly provide a theoretical frame in order to define gender, gender performativity, power, class, sexism, (internalized) misogyny, patriarchy and other terms relevant for the analysis. The following analysis will focus on looking into how each character in *Home, I'm Darling* performs their gender and how the previously mentioned terms affect it.

2. Theatre

2.1. Theatre and Feminism

Theatre has felt the impact of feminism much later than some other academic disciplines. A reason for this is drama departments themselves being relatively new, emerging from already existing English ones (Aston 1). Therefore, the history of the discipline itself has been challenging, if considering its fight for autonomy and gaining recognition for its practices, which are still being defined (Reinelt and Roach qtd. in Aston 1). The core of theatre studies is the "study of drama as the study of theatre in its historical, theoretical, and practical contexts", with feminism having an important impact on the "recent thinking about theatre history, theory and practice" (Aston 1). According to Aston, the feminist view of theatre history looks into how and why the work of women has been "hidden" or on the margins. She elaborates that during the past, there was resistance when it came to connecting theatre to critical theory from the theatre academy itself. However, the continuation of it came regardless, having an impact not only on theatre, but also on humanities in general. Aston notes that as a relatively new discipline, theatre studies and its feminist critical theory leaned in the beginning into feminist projects from other disciplines, including a deconstruction of the portrayal of women in classics done by male authors, which was already done within English studies. As a result, a critique of portrayal of female characters in dramatic texts was able to develop (Aston 2 – 5).

Aston continues by elaborating that what followed was a focus on women's texts, their theory and practice. The British theatre academy depended on the efforts of individual women to create spaces for discussion of women's theatre. By 1990, it was visible that there was an emerging, young generation of British feminist theatre scholars, who despite the different paths shared the wish to understand and theorize the creativity of women in theatre (Aston 6). Feminism within theatre studies analyses performance traditions which work hand in hand with "dominant and oppressive representations of gender, and "glorify the phallus" center stage" (Aston 6). Feminist theatre practice also focused on the need of theoretical knowledge and being a practitioner of theatre not being enough, if they wanted a change in the domination of "male imagination" over the stage (Aston 6 – 7). Efforts of contemporary feminist playwrighting and performance has

resulted in a shape change of the modern dramatic or theatrical cannon, signifying a difference from what is considered mainstream (male) theatre (Aston 54).

2.2.Theatre and Class

According to O'Brien, theatre claims to be an "artform that represents and reflects society" (243), showcasing "individuals, communities and nations" (242). As a result of British society being marked by a spectrum of social divisions that expand beyond the cultural space, one is to expect inequalities to be present in both the workforce and theatrical audience (O'Brien 243). One could even say that a characterizing mark of the British theatre is the exclusion "by gender, by race, and by class" (O'Brien et al. qtd. in O'Brien 242). Statistically speaking, the exclusions in theatre based on class can be noticed in the employment numbers overrepresenting those from affluent, middle-class origin in significant positions, such as acting (Friedman, O'Brien, and Laurison qtd. in O'Brien 242), which also highlights the absence of people of working-class origin.

Furthermore, O'Brien highlights that the discussion regarding those from working-class origin being excluded is a constantly present one in the media space. According to him, the dialogue includes established older individuals with a working-class origin expressing their concern if people like them can still have a career in theatre today, as well as younger working-class artists putting out into the public stories of inequalities and discriminations on account of class. O'Brien notes that this is counterargued by a constant dismissal of class problems by individuals of middle-class origin, oftentimes men (O'Brien 242 – 3).

2.3. Theatrical Performance

According to Johnson, "performance and theatre (and their adjective forms) are often used interchangeably; indeed, reenactment has more frequently been discussed in relation to "theatricality" than "performativity" (2). Osipovich defines it as "a particular kind of interaction between performers and observers (actors and audience members) in a shared physical space" (461). According to Osipovich, an important element of the communication taking place between them is that it is something other than what it seems to be, with both sides being aware of it. Theatrical performance is more than a mere interpretation of a play or its supplement, as there are also improvisational plays with no

written text or the text being written down after the performance (Osipovich 461 – 2). According to Carroll, "a play is to a performance what a recipe is to a meal" and "the play is a recipe to be filled in by the performances of the play" (qtd. in Osipovich 463).

Osipovich elaborates that even when the main intention of a theatre event is staging a written play, the live element of the performance will result in added elements that exceed interpretation. He provides the example of two different theatres producing the same play, but ending up with radically different results, despite going for the same interpretation. He highlights that even within the same theatre, there will be changes in how the actors perform their roles throughout the repetition of the play over time. Sometimes those adjustments are done intentionally, based on the reactions of the audience or who the audience is (Osipovich 462 – 3). Osipovich explains this as the script combined with the actors' rehearsed choices establishing a kind of framework for performance and the play's interpretation being a part of it. Even though the function of the framework is to set the conditions of a performance, that it's live "means that, in a very real sense, actors have to *live* within that framework" (Osipovich 463). Each production is unique, nonrepeatable. Even if one was to collect all the documentation about it in order to reproduce it, it's impossible to create the unique circumstances that were once around it (Osipovich 463 – 4).

Furthermore, Osipovich makes the point that since a live performance is as a whole unrepeatable, it is also unscriptable. Some elements might be repeated, such as the lines the actors are saying, how they move their body, where they stand on stage, etc. However, Osipovich highlights that it's impossible to have the exact same performance night after night since the actors are humans, interacting in real-time with a unique, usually different audience. It is therefore impossible to script the reactions of the audience or a sudden change in an actor's interpretation. The specific circumstances and conditions of that performance expire when the event is done. Therefore, if one cannot script a performance, it can also not be claimed that it's merely an interpretation (Osipovich 464 – 5). Finally, every theatrical performance has to have "at least one performer and one observer in the same space and time, a pretense on the part of the performer that the interaction between the performer and observer is somehow other than it actually is, and an awareness on the part of the observer that the pretense is occurring" (Osipovich 2006: 465).

3. Gender

3.1.Defining Gender

Just like a theatrical performance is more than a mere interpretation of a script (Osipovich 462), gender is more complex than simply being a cultural inscription onto a sex, neither "the casual result of sex nor as seemingly fixed" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 10). What is then the mechanism that constructs this complexity? One could say that gender being a construct implies an automatic prescription of cultural norms onto passive receivers, the bodies. However, according to Butler, "not biology, but culture, becomes destiny" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 12). She sees the body as "not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 521).

The material nature of the body can be linked to gender performativity by exploring where sex as a category is placed in the relationship between the two. "Sex" can be defined as a normative category that "by regulatory practice produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls" (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 1). Therefore, "sex", according to Butler, is a construct that takes form through force. In order to understand the concept of materialization in this context, one also needs to understand the performative nature of gender as a repetitive practice. Therefore, gender isn't something merely inscribed onto the body with its given sex. It isn't "simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (Butler 1990 in Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 2). Therefore, the sex category of the body needs to be recognized as normative, as then it becomes clear that material nature of the body is inseparable from the materialization of that regulatory norm (Butler, *Bodies that Matter* 1 – 3).

While sex makes the division into male and female, the social valuation adds the division of masculinity and femininity to it (Oakley qtd. in Blackstone 335). Gender being a social construct is portrayed by the fact that specific social status, traits or sets of values are ascribed by individuals, groups and societies to individuals solely on the basis of their sex, with variations on how this is done among societies, cultures and over time

(Blackstone 335).

3.2. Gender as a Performance

Just like a theatrical performance, gender is also not a stable, fixed source. In theatre, actors repeat their performances every time the play is on, which creates the character that they play. In the context of gender, identity is constructed through time by the repetition of acts as well. It is connected to the body, "the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kind constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 519). Just like how an actor's interpretation of a character in a play can change over time, depending on when its production is taking place, gender, according to Butler, requires "a conception of a constituted *social temporality*" as well ("Performative Acts" 520).

Osipovich claimed that there's always room for an actor's performance to change due to the repetition of the play in theatre (463). Butler highlighted that there's space for gender transformation in the change of repetition as well, as those repeated individual acts not only constitute the individual's identity, but identity as a believable illusion (Butler, "Performative Acts" 519 – 520). Osipovich also noted that the communication between the actor and the audience is based on both sides knowing it's an illusion (461). However, when it comes to performing gender, one could argue that individuals are often not aware of what their audience, society, indirectly imposes on them throughout their communication.

Furthermore, Osipovich noted that the combination of the script with the rehearsed choices of actors creates a framework for performance in which actors live in, interpretation being a part of it (463). One could connect this to the performance of gender, as one is acting within the framework society has given them, but still has room for their own, individual interpretation. Just like a theatrical performance, it is also public in nature and based on interaction with others. So, due to its public and performative nature, "gender is not a radical choice or a project that reflects a merely individual choice, but neither is it imposed or inscribed upon the individual" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 526).

Despite the room for interpretation, an actor's theatrical performance is still

regulated – with the script, the director's guidelines, etc. The performativity of gender is under societal regulation and it not being performed how society deems proper can result in individuals being punished, both directly and indirectly, whereas performing it "properly" provides the reassurance that gender identity is essential (Butler, "Performative Acts" 526). The cultural readiness to punish or marginalize those who don't perform it as seen proper or that anxiety can so quickly take the place of reassurance is a sign that what is true or false in the context of gender is only decided by society and can in no way be ontologically justified (Butler, "Performative Acts" 526 – 8).

Furthermore, Osipovich noted that it's impossible to produce the exact same performance twice, even if the same actor is playing. As a human being they will do something differently, no matter how insignificant. Also, it's impossible to produce the same play from the past in the exact same way now, despite documentation, since the circumstances aren't the same anymore (Osipovich 463 – 5). In connection to gender, two individuals can try to perform gender identically, but they will undoubtedly do it differently. They will even themselves perform gender differently every day, despite repeating the same actions. Even if one wanted to perform one's gender how it was done in the past, it's impossible to do it now, since the circumstances of the 21st century are different. Finally, although according to Butler the script the actors are playing will outlive them, it still needs the actors in order to be performed ("Performative Acts" 528). So, in the context of gender, times can change and new generations can come, but oftentimes the societal rules and regulations of what gender should look like outlive them as the script one should follow.

3.3.Gender Roles

3.3.1. Defining Gender Roles

In the context of theatre, a role is what an actor performs. The actor has a set idea of how their character should look like, speak, move their body. However, the director, audience, other cast members, have their expectations as well. According to Blackstone, gender roles are "oversimplified understandings of males and females and the differences between them" (337), with their basis being "the different expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have of individuals based on their sex and based on each society's values and beliefs about gender" (335). So, in a way, people are like actors in their

everyday life, performing their gender roles based on what they think they should look like, but also based on what society expects of them.

On stage, an actor's role is built through his interactions with other actors on stage, as well as the stage design. In life, according to Blackstone (336), gender roles are also performed in different interactions between individuals and their environment, while also signaling what kind of behavior is societally seen as suitable for what sex, defined in accordance with each society's beliefs system in regards to the differences between the sexes. Furthermore, gender roles are sometimes a product of stereotypes about gender. Blackstone gives the example of Western society, where the result of the belief that women are more nurturing resulted in the expectation of women nurturing the family and seeking full-time employment within the home. Since men were traditionally seen as leaders, they were expected to be the head of the household and provide financially. In the context of the 21st century, one can say that despite these views still being dominant within society, alternative viewpoints on how one should understand gender roles are being offered (Blackstone 336 – 7).

Just like an actor learns their role before they start to perform it, people learn to perform their gender roles. Blackstone (337) mentions that the feminist perspective on gender roles highlights that if they are something people learn, then it is also something that can (and should) be unlearned, linking this concept to the disproportionate power levels women and men hold in society. She provides the example of having economic control of oneself and their family being one way in which men hold more power in society. Blackstone points out the belief that the man should be bringing in the income and the woman taking care of the family and the household also means that in case of their divorce, the woman often faces poverty. From the feminist lens, this also indicates the power imbalance, since men are unlikely to be financially or status-wise in jeopardy in case of divorce (Blackstone 337).

Gender roles can also be observed in the context of the workplace. According to Kanter (qtd. in Blackstone 337), women are expected to do different tasks and occupy different roles based on their sex. One can observe this within companies at the beginning of the 21st century and how they operated from traditional beliefs about gender roles, such as parental leave benefits only being available to mothers. It can also be noticed how

women are more expected to work as secretaries and men as managers and execs (Blackstone 337). Contemporary gender identities can be seen as "marks or "traces" of residual kinship" (Butler, "Performative Acts" 524).

2.2.2. Gender Roles and Power

Koester defines gender as "one of the most persistent causes, consequences and manifestations of power relations", adding that "understanding gender can therefore significantly enhance our understanding of power and vice versa" (1). She argues that the power relationships in the private sphere make up relations on all levels of society. Gender hierarchies therefore don't only impact individuals, they impact economic, political and social structures. Therefore, according to Koester, it can be claimed that there's no level of society untouched by gender power relations. What is marked as appropriate for men and women "may well be the most persistent cause, consequence and mechanism of power relations from the intimate sphere of the household to the highest level of political decision-making" (Koester 2).

This power perspective on society defining what is appropriate masculine and feminine behavior points to gender not simply being a cause, but also a consequence. This is why it can be stated that gender is one of the systems dividing power, as it interacts with other hierarchical power relationships (Koester 2 – 3). By looking into gender as a mark of wider social structures, Koester points to how gender roles significantly impact how those structures and institutions share the distribution of power. Koester describes the private sphere as "an arena of power and politics" (3) and highlights that unlike the power men hold over one another, the one they hold over women has often been established "in intimate contexts, as everyday life" (MacKinnon qtd. in Koester 3).

3.4. Feminism and Gender

Contemporary feminism favors the Derridean model, which advocates that "binary structures will always privilege one of the binaries over the other: for example, male over female" (Phoca 46). Although some claim that the aim of contemporary feminism is to reverse this system, having the feminine be the privileged one, that is, according to Phoca, actually not the case. She elaborates that the aim is to destabilize the structural ground on which a binary system is based on. If one accepts the idea that this

dual understanding of gender shouldn't continue, what is also accepted is the vigilance and active participation in constructing new ways of configuring the contemporary subject (Phoca 46 – 7).

Phoca claims that the core of feminism as an ideological category is the promotion of gender equality as well as emancipation, therefore being concerned with the struggles of both men and women. When looking into gender being fixed or not, she mentions two streams: essentialism and anti-essentialism. The essentialist gender positioning sees the identities of men and women as fixed and determined by biology. Anti-essentialism sees patriarchy as the agent of positioning women as the "other", therefore acknowledging there's sexual difference, but it not being something that results in a fixed or stable identity (Phoca 47 – 8). This discussion, described by Cixous as reductive (qtd. in Phoca 48), points out how emancipation is not the only factor when it comes to gender politics, but also how categories of gender are structured, understood and shown.

4. Patriarchy

Patriarchy is "a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men – by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (Rich qtd. in Bennett 55). According to Bennett (55), this term doesn't only refer to an individual or group of men, but to a society in which both men and women participate. Therefore, a society can be described as patriarchal "to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being male dominated, male identified, and male centered" (Johnson qtd. in Bennett 55). Walby defines it as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby qtd. in Bennett 56).

Bennett mentions two groups: one seeing the term patriarchy as an attack on men and the second one wanting it to be proved that it is indeed all men's fault. However, Bennett highlights that although men benefit from patriarchy, for example as part of political structures, they also don't have equal access to the power stemming from patriarchal structures. Some are also suffering as a consequence of it. Bennett advocates an approach to patriarchy that moves from a simplified lens of "misogynistic men oppressing virtuous women" (56). She makes the point that women cannot be seen as having no fault in the maintaining of patriarchal structures. Some have supported it with their actions, gained benefits from it and raised their children to obey its rules (Bennett 56 – 8).

Patriarchy is often seen as one simple system, instead of a complex "matrix of oppression" (Collins qtd. in Bennett 58). Bennett highlights that by seeing it as a simple instead of a layered system, one acknowledges only one specific version of it. She points out that when discussing patriarchy, a lot of different factors should be taken into consideration: social class, race, sex, religion, etc. Therefore, one woman cannot express the experience of all women in the world, as their experience of the patriarchal system isn't the same. When taking about patriarchy, we do not only talk about history of men, but women as well – since they have survived, resisted and contributed to it (Bennett 58 – 9). Ezell in her analysis of 17th century England makes a point of its endurance by emphasizing its "loose structure" (qtd. in Bennett 2006: 59), which made sure that the

conditions aren't bad enough to push most women from their everyday lives into rebellion. Looking into how patriarchy functions today, we can see the link between women being vulnerable and the endurance of patriarchy, making it seem as if there's safety in protected subordination (Bennett 59).

An often-used argument brought up by Bennett is that male dominance is something that can't be avoided, having its roots in biological differences. By making it seem as something that is static, it also justifies why it cannot be changed (Bennett 60). However, "a nonpatriarchal sex-gender system could exist if allowed to" (Eisenstein qtd. in Bennett 60). Bennett makes a point here that patriarchy still being alive today is a result of us failing to understand how it has functioned in the past. Until we understand its past first, "the lives of women and men will be twisted by the perverse strengths of patriarchal institutions" (Bennett 60). Patriarchy bleeds into all domains of society, including the belief that the person presiding the state should be male and that male voices should dominate public/private spaces (Code 316).

4.1. The Public/Private Dichotomy

Škrlec (288) claims that the private/public dichotomy is a violation of female political, economic and human rights because it keeps them outside of the international discourse, highlighting the harmfulness of separating the private from the public for women. She highlights that by bringing the private to the level of political, a new importance was given to what was previously seen as "trivial", taking place in a private home – such as domestic violence against women and children, gender-based division of work, etc. Some don't see the removal of the public/private dichotomy as the solution. Since the private sphere is entailed within the public one, a new system where the political is what helps one be free in their humanity is needed (Šrklec 286 – 8). Irigaray (qtd. in Škrlec 287) doesn't see the rejection of the dichotomy as feasible until women are independent in the fullness of their identity. According to Phillips and Arendt (qtd. in Škrlec 287), keeping the dichotomy allows the space for some decisions to remain private. Motiejunaite (qtd. in Škrlec 287) makes the point that if the hierarchical treatment of dichotomies needs to be removed, they are to be kept as a part of society's structure. The postmodern perspective advocates a loose division between the public and private (Škrlec 286 – 8).

5. Misogyny

According to Grey, misogyny is connected to the rise of patriarchy, with some evidence that earlier societies which were matricentric held women in a higher regard. Patriarchy's rise, including its innate misogyny, intertwines with the idea that military conquests created more peaceful societies (Grey 3712). Its origins can be recognized in the abandonment of goddess-worshipping societies into accepting myths that demonstrate a sense of fear and envy of "women's power and authority, rationalizing men's taking over of women's responsibility for agriculture, pottery, ownership of land, and household management" (Grey 3712). The term "misogyny" comes from Greek (*misein*: to hate, *gyn*: woman) and means "the implicit or explicit male denigration and/or hatred of women, and latterly of feminism" (Code 291). Code goes on to provide historical examples of it, such as Augustine who claimed that a woman is not made in the image of God and Marx's view of women being dangerous creatures as they're too close to nature (291).

Misogyny can be defined as the "systematic cultural and ideological hatred of women, that has both overt and covert manifestations across the globe" (Grey 3710). Grey describes it as an ideology with the aim to rationalize the hatred and hostility of men towards everything seen as female. It is to be found in an array of laws, rules imposed on women, myths and legends, "from the early patriarchal myths, through medieval witch-massacres and genocide of female infants, to modern day rape laws, mother-in-law jokes, and sadistic pornography" (Grey 3710). Grey highlights that the most obvious form of misogyny is in different forms of violence against women, such as rape, sexual abuse and assault, and sex tourism. According to Grey, misogyny can also be recognized in the discrimination women face in social institutions, such as law, education, etc. and in the silencing of women and erasure of their existence and impact in history (Grey 3710 – 1).

When looking into the psychological roots of misogyny, Grey explains that feminist psychologists and anthropologists are of the opinion that they are based in men's fear and envy of women's connection with basic mysteries of life and death, with some using the term "womb envy" to elaborate men's revolt against women's connection to creating life. The envy and dread towards it stemming from ancient times is still present today in "all aspects of female procreativity, creativity and labor", being reflected in many

cultures by women's power being portrayed as "hostile, destructive, controlling, or malign" (Grey 3711). Therefore, it can be said that the way in which misogyny manifests itself shows that it is "a male tendency to project fears and anxieties onto women as evil, inferior beings whose threat to the patriarchal order must be naturalized; behavior that threatens patriarchal institutions, such as illegitimacy, abortion, and lesbianism, is labeled as "deviant" or criminal" (Grey 3711). Misogyny can therefore be understood as a way of rationalizing and spreading fear of women's power, which also has the effect to conceal, from both men and women, the illusion that is the supposedly inherent male superiority (Grey 3710 – 2).

5.1. Internalized Misogyny

Internalized misogyny can be defined as "the self-hatred of women who believe patriarchy's message about their innate inadequacy, inferiority, even monstrosity" and it being the cause "of women's depression, dependency on approval, eating disorders, and other crippling behaviors, and a means by which women collude in their own oppression" (Grey 3712).

Constantinescu points out that the mainstream media plays a role in this, trying to push a narrative onto women that equality has been achieved decades ago, with feminists being free to take a pause from their activism. She describes this as a collective gaslighting of women. The significance of internalization of oppression is in it being "a fundamentally necessary mechanism for oppression in general, and one of the main roadblocks for women trying to overcome sexism" (Constantinescu 122). Due to it relying on the assimilation of the already existing gender social order, it is not uncommon to find a level of internalized oppression even in feminist theories (Constantinescu 120 – 2).

Constantinescu explains that a possible reasoning for this could be women's fear of losing social rewards, for example social acceptance. Another could be the increase of personal and collective self-esteem by self-stereotyping. However, there aren't really benefits of complying to the "good girl" criteria, whereas there is punishment for gender non-conforming women (Constantinescu 122). In addition to this, women internalize men's messages undermining their value and skills repetitively about themselves, as well as other women (Bem and Rich qtd. in Constantinescu 122). Although the conditions for the internalization of a woman's oppression are set from her birth (Bem qtd. in

Constantinescu 122), the internalization of sexist messages starts in the period of adolescence. A contemporary example of wanting to keep things as they are is the open letter women sent during the MeToo movement, saying it's wrong as it will "change the way men and women interact", with men being unable to flirt anymore (Wisher qtd. in Constantinescu 124). Finally, Constantinescu makes the point that internalized misogyny cannot be analyzed in isolation, without taking into consideration other social factors such as race, class, etc. Not being analyzed in such a way can result in some women participating "in the perpetuation of sexism on a social scale, especially when certain aspects of that sexism may not impact them as heavily as in the case with other groups of women" (Constantinescu 124).

6. Sexism

6.1.Defining Sexism

Sexism refers "to social arrangements, policies, language, and practices enacted by men or women that express a systematic, often institutionalized belief that men are superior, women inferior" (Code 364). According to Code, its power, both political and cognitive, originally stems from acts that people have started to define as "racist", the context being a time when awareness was growing in regards to oppressions in western societies towards other than white men. When considering what is a sexist practice, Code mentions that it ranges from seemingly simple examples, such as calling adult women "girls", to more complex ones, such as refusing a woman's "no" when trying to make sexual advances (Code 364).

6.2. Differentiating Sexism from Misogyny

Although sexism and misogyny "inform one another, misogyny manifests itself in psychologically-based fear or hatred of women, sexism in systemic discrimination, or failure to take women into account" (Code 291). Misogyny can be understood as "the law enforcement" branch of patriarchal order, which has the overall function of *policing* and *enforcing* its governing norms and expectations" (Manne 78), whereas sexism is the "justificatory" branch of it, consisting of an ideology with the overall function of "*rationalizing* and *justifying* patriarchal social relations" (Manne 79).

Manne explains that the way sexism functions is by making sex differences something that is determined by nature and using that as justification for the social order dictated by patriarchy, as well as portraying this as inevitable and unchangeable. Therefore, sexist ideology is a system made up of assumptions, beliefs, theories, etc., with the aim of representing men and women as different in such a way that would make people more willing to support and keep the patriarchal social arrangements. Misogyny on the other hand does its policing and enforcing of patriarchal social order without necessarily "going via the intermediary of people's assumption, beliefs, theories, values, and so on", therefore serving "to enact or bring about patriarchal social relations in ways that may be direct, and more or less coercive" (Manne 79). So, according to Manne, sexism discriminates between men and women based on the alleged sex differences that go

beyond what is or could be familiar whereas misogyny differentials between women, dividing them into good and bad, punishing the bad ones. They share the same purpose, which is to keep the patriarchal social order as it is, but they do it in different ways: sexism by claiming to be a voice of reason and misogyny by force (Manne 78 – 80).

7. Class, Gender and the Workplace

7.1.Class

According to Bourdieu, when discussing class, one can question in the context of the social world and its struggles if class actually exists or if we're discussing a scientific construct. Since it plays a big role in politics, however it's answered will have a basis in a political choice, "even if the two possible stands on the existence of classes correspond to two probable stances on the mode of knowledge, realist or constructivist, of which the notion of class is the product" (Bourdieu 1).

O'Brien highlights that class is a tricky, complex term to define, but that as a category it can be seen as an "expression of identity" that helps one understand the way in which society is structured and organized (243). By looking into the positions in labor markets, one gets an insight into not only the social standing of an individual, but also their life chances and direction (O'Brien 244).

Wright focused on three causal processes relevant to class: identifying class with the "attributes and material conditions of the lives of individuals", focusing on the ways in which "social positions give some people control over economic resources of various sorts while excluding others from access of those resources", and identifying class "with the ways in which economic positions give some people control over the lives and activities of others" (Wright 3). Understanding class through individual attributes and life conditions is the most common way, ranging from "sex, age, race, religion, intelligence, education, geographical location, etc." (Wright 3). These attributes people have "from birth, some they acquire but once acquired are very stable, and some are quite dependent on a person's specific social situation at any point in time and may accordingly change" (Wright 3). According to Wright, the characterization of people can also be done by looking into their material living conditions, for example if they live in an apartment or mansion, in poverty, have an adequate income or significant accumulated wealth, etc. Therefore, one could define class as the interconnection of individual attributes with the material conditions in which people live (Wright 4). Clustering together these various individual attributes and material conditions of life creates clusters that are classes (Wright 4).

7.2.Class and Gender

Gender-class differences are visible in the employment beliefs and attitudes that women have, with their experiences at work and at home "shaped by social class, heightening identification with gender for relatively upper-class women and identification with class for relatively lower-class women" (McGinn and Oh 1). Middle- and upper-class women work in male-dominated spaces, their employment is optional in their household and they are part of communities that may "uphold gendered ideals of women as communal and other-oriented" (McGinn and Oh 86). Lower-class women are more often found working in female-dominated occupations, them not working isn't an option due to limited finances of the household (McGinn and Oh 86).

7.3.Women at Work

The idea behind women going into the workforce from the feminist perspective was supposed to be the pathway to their liberation. However, "working for low wages did not liberate poor and working-class women from male domination" (Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* 48). Hooks elaborates that the central idea of reformist feminist thinkers of a privileged social background was that obtaining high-paying careers was the pathway to achieving social equality with their male counterparts at work. That vision wasn't relevant for masses of women, unlike the equal pay demands. Hooks highlights that the change in the salary inequality didn't completely erase gender discrimination, as the pay gap persists to this day. From today's perspective, Hooks argues that work didn't bring liberation from male domination, despite women being part of the workforce for decades. Although there's women in high-paying workplaces, there's still many women who are economically tied to patriarchal males and unable to leave them. Hooks makes the point that being able to work didn't equate to economic self-sufficiency, and this change of narrative focuses on what kind of work liberates, rather than talking about work in general terms (Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* 50).

Hooks argues that the effect that going into the workforce had for women wasn't liberation, but the positive benefits of it were an increase of their self-esteem and communal participation. Housewives were noted to be feeling isolated and lonely. Being a part of a workplace made them feel like a part of something bigger. For the women in charge of taking care of the home, the home was a type of a workplace. For men, the

home was a place of relaxation, whereas for the women it was relaxing only when the husband and children weren't present. Many women were unable to find a satisfying job and joining the workforce even lessened their quality of life within the household (Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* 50).

Hooks argues that giving women a way out would be providing them with another way to define work. As a result of the surging cost of living, work doesn't imminently result in economic self-sufficiency for most. Despite the focus of feminist scholars to highlight how women being a part of the workforce has affected their sense of self at home, Hooks highlights that it fails to analyze if women being in the workforce has impacted male domination positively. She also mentions that there's men who see working women as the cause of unemployment and the loss of their identity of being the patriarchal provider. Conclusively, according to Hooks, early feminist movement failed to set economic self-sufficiency as the primary goal for women (Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* 50 – 51).

Another aspect to be observed that Hooks brings to light is that the feminist thought was that, by going into the workforce, women will stop being "just" housewives. Most women didn't start working because they thought of it as empowering, but to support their household with extra income. They looked for jobs that wouldn't be an obstacle to their obligations at home. Instead of children being the motivation for women to stay at home, in the 1970ies they were the expense that resulted in wives with kids at home being more prone to work (Bird qtd. in Hooks, *Feminist Theory* 97). Hooks argues that if the feminist movement had placed its focus on improving work conditions of women alongside with better pay and job opportunities for unemployed women of all classes, it would have been a movement for all women. However, the focus was careerism (Hooks, *Feminist Theory* 96 - 100).

Lorber looks into the division of housework between men and women from today's Western perspective. It gets divided relatively equally in households of all men or all women. However, Lorber points out that when heterosexual couples move in together, they fall into the following division: the woman does the cleaning, cooking, etc., the man is the one fixing things, taking care of the car, etc. She continues to claim that the modern society's gendered division of work is familiar. Men are expected to do work

outside of the home and women within it. It is on the woman to take care of the children, as well as the man's emotional and physical needs. According to Lorber, women do more housework, which in unpaid, regardless if the couple has children. Domestic work was necessary in non-industrialized societies for the survival of the family – it produced what the family members needed. However, nowadays most of that can be purchased (Lorber 172 – 4).

Lorber explains that the contemporary division of labor with women primarily responsible for the household and children is seen as a "normal and natural outcome of women's procreative capabilities or feminine skills and personality" (Lorber 175). Despite the narrative that tries to show women's role within the household as glorified, "the allocation of most unpaid domestic work and nurturance to women has significant economic and social benefits for men and is exploitive of women's time and energy" (Delphy and Leonard qtd. in Lorber 175). Lorber argues that what is tried to be portrayed and justified as natural is the result of systematically depriving married women of the right to be in control of their own property and finances, including profit and wages (Lorber 175).

8. Analysis

The corpus used for the analysis part of this thesis is the play *Home I'm Darling* by Laura Wade. One of the reasons for choosing this specific play for it was to see how upcoming female playwrights present the topic of gender performativity on stage in the context of British theatre. Wade's play in particular has a unique take on it, already visible from the word play in the title. The analysis is done per character: Judy, Fran, Sylvia, Johnny, Alex and Marcus. Also taken into consideration is the Ideal Home at the beginning and at the end of the play, now reconstructed. Each analysis of a character includes looking into other characters, as they are necessary for their own character development. For example, Judy and Johnny are strongly defined by each other. The house acts as its own character in a way. The analysis's main focus is looking into how the characters perform their gender, how their gender performativity impacts others, what are the consequences of gender stereotypes influencing the way they act and think, and how patriarchal and social norms affect their acts. Parallels will be drawn between them and their differences. Furthermore, the aspect of work will be taken into consideration in the context of the female characters and how they differentiate (working wife, housewife, career woman, etc.), as well as how that shapes and impact their relationships, attitudes towards each other and opinions.

8.1.The Ideal Home

Home I'm Darling is set in the home of a married middle-aged couple, Johnny (37) and Judy (38). The play opens with both of them at home, Johnny getting ready for work and Judy making him breakfast. It is in the style of the 50ies, the stage directions describing it as the "*Ideal Home*" that is "*immaculately clean*" (Wade 1.1). The conversation of the couple seems playful, highlighting how perfect everything is – the breakfast, the day, etc. and how they are "terribly" and "appallingly" happy (Wade 1.1). As a reader, one gets the impression as if everything is too perfect, almost staged – as if one is watching a 50ies commercial, not real life. The moment the reader is thrown unexpectedly out of the 50ies dream is when Judy goes back to the desk and opens a laptop.

As the play continues, we learn that the house is outside of London, set in modern times. The couple is against modernization and new shops emerging there, as according

to them, that is ruining the place they live in. The modernity is in stark contrast to their home, full of vintage, colorful elements depicting the 50ies. An example of their resistance is them agreeing to never visit the new shopping mall. However, the first fight between them is because Johnny has actually been going to the pizza place there. As a reader, it seems comical that Judy seems to be more concerned about that than about her doubt that he's been cheating on her there. This shopping mall example is the first one showing how strong Judy's resistance is to change and novelty, as well of how strongly she tries to live to what she describes as "50ies values". For her, those values mean less consumption, people being more in community. Johnny expresses a similar viewpoint: "I look around and think well what more do I need? My wife, my beautiful finished house. The money would come in handy, but we don't *need* it, do we? We've got everything" (Wade 1.1). However, it's evident they are unable to fully live in the 50ies despite their best efforts. For example, Judy buys modern groceries and puts them into 1950ies tins. So, as a reader, one gets confused – what are the rules of them playing to live in the 50ies exactly? What are those values Judy speaks about actually? Why are they so attached to it?

The home serves as a place where they get to live what they see as the 50ies life. Unlike the world outside that they cannot control with its rapid changes, within the house they get to set up the values, order and setting they see as right. However, it's impossible for that house (and them) to live in isolation from the outside world completely. The modern world being expensive and it being hard to survive if only one member of the household is working has to reflect on them, too. Even though they have managed to sustain that lifestyle for three years, the reality and financial cost of it are catching up with them.

Therefore, in order for them to keep the home the way it is, a lot of money is needed. It is much pricier to repair an antique fridge or car than to simply get a new appliance, but Judy sees that as giving up. Due to their debt, the house itself could be taken away by the bank. Judy's desperate need to keep the house as it is, and her fight to keep the house in general, symbolize that it's about something more for her. Losing the house would mean losing the dream of living the 50ies life she's always dreamt of. Without it, Judy feels like she would lose herself: "I don't know who I am without the

fifties "(Wade 2.6). Performing gender "properly" provides the reassurance that gender identity is essential (Butler, "Performative Acts" 526 – 8). It provides Judy with a sense of stability. If we see gender as identity constructed through time by the repetition of acts (Butler, "Performative Acts" 519), we understand why Judy repeating the same acts for three years resulted in being a housewife also being her whole identity. Understanding gender as a "cultural construct" instead of a "casual result of sex" (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 10) also helps us recognize how what was seen as the norm for women impacts how Judy creates her own perfect housewife image and subsequently, the Ideal Home.

Furthermore, all scenes of the play take place in the house, on its two floors. When outside characters come in, they unsettle the 50ies idyll the couple tries so hard to maintain: Slyvia with her criticism of how her daughter interprets feminism, Fran being unable to be a domestic goddess like her friend, despite her husband Marcus wanting her to be one, Marcus, who is a good friend, being accused of sexual assault, Alex, who underlines Johnny's doubts about their lifestyle with her questions. They also don't always come announced, which increases that effect of disturbance of the peace, as well as the questions hanging in the air between Johnny and Judy.

So, one could say that the house is a literal stage for performing gender: Judy does everything she thinks a perfect wife and housewife should do, and Johnny plays the role of the breadwinner, letting her take care of him after coming home. The house itself seems like it is playing a role with all its details, perfect meals, cleanliness, in establishing a place where with the repetition of their acts, both of them can play their perfect, traditional gender roles – until its façade starts to slowly break. What seems to be a private sphere, leads to uncovering problems of the public one.

8.2.Judy

8.2.1. "Just" a Housewife

It is clearly visible from Judy's character from the beginning that gender isn't just a "casual result of sex" (Butler, Gender Trouble 10), as we see how much effort she puts into performing the role of the perfect housewife. What is interesting is that she didn't make the transition from a housewife into the workforce, but vice versa. Judy openly says that she has hated her job and we can see in act 2, scene 1 that it was her own wish to be

a housewife. We can observe her playing the role of the perfect wife in how she keeps the home, in the elaborate meals she makes, in her appearance when her husband comes home. Throughout the play, she highlights that this is what she wants and what makes her, as she describes, “deep, quiet kind of happy” (Wade 1.2).

One could therefore say that Judy is a critique of the idea that women going into the workforce was supposed to provide them with fulfilled, happy lives, whereas being “just” a housewife wasn’t enough. It also cannot be said that Judy made her decision due to the lack of knowledge about feminism or her rights. She defends her choice in conversation with her mother Sylvia after calling herself a feminist by saying: “I am. I get to choose now. This is what I’ve chosen” (Wade 1.2). However, Sylvia counterargues with “wearing a frilly apron and dancing around with a duster isn’t feminism. I don’t know why you ever let Johnny coax you into it”, and that although her choice might have felt mutual, “if you look back long enough this was a man’s idea first” (Wade 1.2). In fact, one can say that no one really understands Judy’s choice or agrees fully with it. Even Johnny, who claims to love it, changes his opinion gradually: “How can you be tired? You don’t do anything” (Wade 2.2), despite enjoying the benefits of her housework daily. We can also see it in the conversation with Fran: “Marcus wants me to quit work, do this” JUDY: “This is work.” FRAN: “Quit my job I mean” (Wade 1.2). Sylvia also challenges if what Judy does is really work: “What do you do? What do you do all day?” (Wade 1.2).

One can therefore say that even with the time passed, domestic work still isn’t recognized as work and is diminished. When Judy challenges this by saying “I’m working. My work here is work, why isn’t this valued?”, Sylvia replies with: “Because men don’t do it.” (Wade 1.2). Here, one can observe the stereotypes around being a housewife: one doesn’t do anything all day, “dances around with a frilly apron”, or even if there’s recognition of the work, it’s not seen as something that should take all day long. The characters have this opinion despite being physically in the house and being able to see that Judy takes care of the home immaculately. Sylvia’s question puts this in perspective: if men were to be housewives, would this still be seen as doing nothing or being “just” a housewife? Or would it be valued differently in society?

8.2.2. The Housewife Daughter and Feminist Mother

When looking into Judy’s relationship with Sylvia, we can see a big clash between

a housewife (Judy) and a second-wave feminist (Sylvia). Sylvia cannot understand why her daughter, who was raised around feminist values, would choose such a path, despite feminism promoting that its essence is each woman getting to choose for herself. One could even add that Sylvia is ashamed of what Judy does: "(…) people asking me how you are, what you're doing, and having to tell them you're a *housewife*? My daughter" (Wade 1.2). Another question that can be raised is the isolation of housewives. Throughout the whole play, we never see Judy leaving the house. She doesn't have any friends who are also housewives or who at least fully understand her choice. If there's something "negative" going on, she tends to retreat back to housework – to cleaning, decorating the cake, cooking, etc., again within the walls of the house.

Judy deliberately chose her isolation and with the context of her growing up, we understand more why, or as Fran puts it, why it put her off of people. She describes her childhood in the feminist commune as "filthy", and that when she asked why they didn't have a cleaner, the leader Erica replied that that would be exploitative towards women. She describes the commune members as "a random collection of oddballs trying to be unconventional" (Wade 1.5). In a way, Judy challenges what it means to be a feminist here. The place that was supposed to be the heart of it in her eyes was disorganized, filthy and trying to be different for the sake of it. In a way, we can say that Judy is accusing them of their feminism being a performance. One can even say it is what made her go radically in the other direction, trying to emulate the perfect 50ies housewife. Her ultimate challenge of it is calling herself a feminist because she made a choice for herself. Is she really one, with the lifestyle she is living? Is Sylvia really a feminist if she's rejecting her daughter's choice, if the point of feminism was for everyone to choose for themselves (even if we personally disagree with it)?

We also see the context of Sylvia's opinion: she got to see her mother die while claiming she has wasted her life and her purpose as an individual, even though Sylvia tried to tell her that being a mother and a housewife was already a lot. In a way, we can say that Sylvia is watching her daughter go down the same path, and is afraid she will feel the same at the end of it. So, on the one hand, we have Sylvia, who sees Judy's work not as real work and a life of taking care of children and the house as a waste of purpose, in contradiction to Judy, who saw their feminist way of living as performative and glorified.

It can be said that Judy performs her gender constantly, through different acts around the house, but also in the way she speaks. In the beginning, we see her playing the perfect traditional wife in the way she dresses, recipes she cooks, etc. However, with the progression of the play, we also see her diminishing the negative aspects of society while also taking active part in them, such as blaming the woman who came forward about Marcus, as she's playing the role of the submissive, understanding woman.

8.2.3. Housewife Judy: Choice as a Form of Privilege

Another aspect to be observed in the relationship between Judy and Sylvia is Sylvia challenging her daughter on her understanding of feminism and privilege. Judy sees her choice in a vacuum, as a personal, individual one. However, Sylvia sees personal choices as a result of one own's position in society. Sylvia questions Judy if she would still have the option to make the choice of being a housewife if she had children, Johnny wasn't working, etc. If Judy wasn't supported by another income, it would be impossible to sustain that kind of lifestyle. Furthermore, Sylvia questions the financial cost of that lifestyle. Being able to financially invest in the repair of the vintage elements of the house is a privilege. One of the ways to understand class is looking into the living conditions of individuals. Johnny and Judy live in their own, spacious home, designed according to their taste and spend money on their preference, not only basic life necessities. Ironically, what Judy sees as a choice that is less focused on finances is possible only with stable financial income. However, when we see a shift in that stability, we also see that lifestyle become jeopardized. Slyvia as a character in opposition to Judy's is a reminder of the intersectional nature of feminism – one being able to make choices for their lifestyle as an individual depends on class, race, gender, etc., not solely on an individual's preference.

8.3. Fran

8.3.1. The Domestic Goddess versus the Working Woman

Fran could be seen as Judy's opposite. Fran loves her job, Judy hated hers. Judy loves being a housewife, Fran doesn't seem to be that skilled around the house. However, what we can notice is that Fran doesn't judge Judy. On the contrary, it seems like Judy's actions remind her of what she should be like but isn't. The question is also how much of her trying to take care of her home better is her own wish, and how much comes from her husband Marcus pressuring her to the point where she can't hear her own thoughts.

Instead of realizing it's hard to have energy to work at home as well after her shift ends, it feels as if Fran blames herself: "I just don't think I've got a domestic goddess in me (…) I come home after a twelve hour day and I'm frazzled" (Wade 1.2). This reflect the idea that doing domestic work is something that women have inborn and that by not being enthusiastic about it, they are failing as women. Basically, this reflects the expectation that specific traits will be assigned to someone solely on the basis of their sex (Blackstone 335). Even though Marcus is the tidier one, Fran is the one expected to take care of their home.

Here we can also observe how the idea that women going into the workforce is going to liberate them didn't work out for Fran either. She's now expected to do and excel at both. The way that domestic work is expected to be divided is beneficial for Marcus, as it has "significant economic and social benefits for men and is exploitive of women's time and energy" (Delphy and Leonard qtd. in Lorber 175). Judy and Fran don't criticize each other, at least never intentionally. One could say that Fran meets Judy's decisions and lifestyle with curiosity: for example, Fran borrowing the book about housework from Judy. Even when Judy gets insulted by Fran bringing up that she saw Johnny at the pizza place, Fran apologizes and seems to be honestly feeling bad, despite doing what many would consider being a good friend. Marcus on the other hand gets into Fran's head so much with his comments, that she starts doubting herself. As a result of that, one can notice how much of an influence he has on her. Marcus as the man determines "what part women shall or shall not play" (Rich qtd. in Bennett 55), or in Fran's case, how her being his wife should look like.

8.3.2. Male Expectations regarding Housework

If Fran doesn't meet her husband's expectations regarding the household, he makes negative comments about it. However, when Fran does more around the house, Marcus is snarky and sarcastic about it: "I haven't had to get into an unmade bed all week", "She keeps opening the windows", "Yes, the house is transformed", "Fran makes it in the mug at home and I can almost hear my mother turning in her grave" (Wade 1.5). Women internalize men's messages undermining their value and skills repetitively about themselves, as well as other women (Bem and Rich qtd. in Constantinescu 122). Therefore, it is not surprising that Fran is questioning and doubting herself.

Furthermore, just like everyone is criticizing Judy for not doing enough or having

a real job, Marcus is criticizing Fran for not doing enough at home. Even more, when Fran makes an effort, Marcus dismisses it as it doesn't live up to his standards. So, not only does he enjoy the benefits of her labor around the home, he chooses how it will be evaluated – not good enough or like something to be laughed at. Here we can also say it's not about Fran not being domestic at all – it's about Marcus talking down on her regardless of her efforts.

Marcus constantly and openly compares Fran and Judy in front of others, calling Judy the "Angel of the House", telling Fran she could be "just as good" or "almost as good, anyway" (Wade 1.5) if she practiced. Although Fran is uncomfortable and asking him to stop multiple times, Judy only sees this as a compliment. Even though Fran is her friend, Judy doesn't defend her in any way. So, here we can say that Judy contributes to the misogynistic way Marcus builds one woman up at the expense of another, as by accepting what Marcus is saying she gives him space to continue.

The situation culminates with Marcus calling Fran his beautiful wife he likes best, even if she is a "terrible slattern" (Wade 1.5). The use of the derogatory, insulting language is masked as humor. Oftentimes derogatory, inappropriate sexist remarks at the expense of women are justified as humor. Fran's discomfort is not only ignored by Marcus, but also Judy and Johnny. No one criticizes Marcus for the way he had talked to her. Even more, as the play continues, one can notice that his comments are never criticized. What is marked as appropriate for men and women "may well be the most persistent cause, consequence and mechanism of power relations from the intimate sphere of the household to the highest level of political decision-making" (Koester 2). Therefore, it isn't surprising that Marcus is also behaving inappropriately towards women as a boss at work.

When observing the uncomfortable power dynamic between Fran and Marcus, it's obvious that he's the dominant one. Koester defines gender as "one of the most persistent causes, consequences and manifestations of power relations" (1). What the figure of Marcus does is what society often does itself: praising one woman by criticizing or hating on the other. Favoring one choice over the other. However, both Judy and Fran are being criticized, despite making very different choices for their lifestyle. Fran is even criticized for both working and taking care of the house. So, the question that can be raised here is if neither Judy nor Fran is praised for the chosen lifestyle, is the problem really them not

working, not being good enough housewives, etc. or how society treats them? One can also question why Marcus expects Fran to be able to both work and have a perfect home like a housewife in the first place? Why are women in general expected to overwork themselves in order to make their husbands, families and society happy?

8.3.3. To Work or Not to Work

Just like Judy, Fran has the privilege of choice in terms of work. However, after three years of being a housewife, Judy's situation has changed. Choosing to be a housewife depends not only on personal preference, but on the economic situation in society. With Johnny not getting the promotion, one income isn't sufficient to sustain both partners in the 21st century. What is challenged with the notion of Judy hiding bills is if it was ever sustainable in the first place. However, Fran is able to play with the idea of staying at home or not as her husband earns more. What's pressuring her isn't her financial situation but her husband. We can see that for both Fran and Judy finance wasn't initially a deciding factor in choosing to be a housewife or not. Both couples are childless. So, what financial freedom is able to buy them is the luxury of the preferred lifestyle: for Judy, it's maintaining her dream home, for Fran's husband Marcus it is having a wife for whom his needs and the home are top priority.

8.4. Sylvia

Sylvia is the character that pushes and challenges Judy's beliefs directly the most. It comes in those interactions to light the most that Judy sees the 50ies in an idealistic, unrealistic way. What Judy created even visually in her home, despite all the efforts, isn't a realistic portrayal of the 50ies. Her home is colorful, warm, whereas Sylvia explains that the 50ies were a grey, cold, difficult time. People warming up around the fireplace wasn't the communal image Judy has, but as Sylvia explains, it was the only room in the house that would be warm in a cold winter. That lifestyle was one of struggle, both financial, social and individual for women, whereas what Judy is doing now, as Sylvia reminds her, is a luxury choice.

In a way, the dissatisfaction of both clashes here. Sylvia's displeasure comes from the fact that a period she had lived through, that was difficult for women, is being shown as something idealistic. When it benefited society, being a housewife and housework was portrayed as something joyful, easy and fulfilling, even though housewives felt isolated. There wasn't really an alternative for women. By seeing her daughter as a housewife,

Sylvia sees is it as a dismissal of all the effort put into societal change by women so that new generations would be able to do and be more. On the other hand, joining the workforce was supposed to make women liberated and happy. However, this didn't happen for Judy. This connects to the question that Hooks raised – was it enough to just chase employment of women as a goal or should there have been more focus on what kind of work was being offered? The things Judy is missing – community, home, less focus on the materialistic things, is the reality of a lot of women, regardless of their employment status, today.

To continue, Judy's perspective that "old ways are the best" (Wade 1.2) isn't realistic and Sylvia challenges her on that. One of the biggest critiques that's delivered through the character of Sylvia is how privileged Judy's choice is: Judy explains that what they love about the 50ies is that "it's not all about acquiring stuff" and that she likes "being frugal, it's a project, it's fun" (Wade 1.2), to which Sylvia replies by asking if when it stops being fun, if she will get a job. What is a fun project for Judy was the unavoidable reality for many women of a less privileged class who weren't able to just stop when it wasn't fun. By calling needing a job to be fulfilled a bit capitalistic, Judy gets called out by Sylvia not to try to make her choice seem political when it a luxury one. She highlights that Judy doesn't have children to support and has a healthy, working husband. She points out that the choices Judy has today, such as contraception, abortion, refusing sex from her husband and divorce, weren't possible for women in the 50ies. Sylvia is watching her daughter try to play out her interpretation of what it was like to be a woman in the 50ies as if it was a fun project.

Another aspect of Judy's relationship with Sylvia is Sylvia challenging her vision of the men around her. Judy for example speaks in a more preferable way about her father than about Sylvia: "Dad would understand", to which Sylvia replies: "Oh Dad would understand, perfect Dad" (Wade 2.3). She saw her father as a 1950ies gentleman; however, Sylvia shares that her father had multiple mistresses. Furthermore, Judy tries to defend Marcus without considering that the woman who claimed he sexually assaulted her might be telling the truth, and Sylvia challenges her on why would someone put themselves in such a situation at work in the first place. One can conclude that Judy's refusal to challenge the men around her about anything is connected to her not wanting her ideal version of the 50ies to fall apart, as they play a key role in it. It also ties into the

stereotypes about men – seeing them as gentlemen, providers, the strong, responsible head of the house.

8.5. Johnny

When observing Johnny's character, one can see that the gender role he's expected to play doesn't fully fit him. If Marcus was Judy's partner, he would be much more able to play it fully – he'd enjoy having a wife at home, the attention on him all the time, having the space to be domineering. Johnny on the other hand wasn't as enthusiastic as Judy about their arrangement from the beginning. JUDY: "And you go out to work as before, nothing different except you feel like a real provider. My rock. My Rock Hudson. My man, out in the world all day. Knowing I'm here at home waiting for you." JOHNNY: "It isn't a bit sexist, maybe?" (Wade 2.1). Although seemingly enjoying the 50ies arrangement in the first part of the play and being critical towards modern times ("Modern cars it's just a computer on wheels, isn't it?" (Wade 1.5)), that image starts to quickly crack. We can notice it in his small comments and stories, such as him mentioning that Toby doesn't let his wife near the kitchen, to which Judy replies that she's sure he lets her clean up. Another one is Johnny wanting to make a cake by himself for the office bakeoff, but Judy wanting to do it for him, to which Johnny replies that he was a better cook than her before they started their arrangement. What this reflects is Judy being firm about playing her role, being the one doing everything for him, and Johnny still wanting to contribute, or feel like he can still do things on his own.

Another aspect of their relationship is intimacy. Judy believed that her staying at home would increase their physical intimacy: "And, you know, at night, I wouldn't be so tired. Neither of us would be so tired" (Wade 2.1). However, instead of them becoming closer, they drift more and more apart. We can see Johnny trying to touch Judy in different scenes, but her mind is always preoccupied with something else that needs to be taken care of. In the scene where Johnny is getting Judy into a lying position on the couch, Judy says she doesn't want to do it on the sofa, to which Johnny replies that he thought she liked it when he took charge. She gets up, says she doesn't feel like it and starts cleaning up. This ends with him going to the bar but not taking his 50ies hat, symbolically also starting to leave their arrangement.

Throughout the play, Judy tries to be the wife that's fully taking care of her husband's needs. However, we can see it smothering him. One can observe the scene in

which she scrapes food from her own plate onto his, despite his already being full and him protesting. Judy explains their life and them as how they are supposed to be, but Johnny disagrees: “I’m supposed to feel like a pig in shit, lucky Johnny. It actually makes me feel like a child, I feel, I feel like the whole thing is just some kind of delusion” (Wade 2.2.). Instead of feeling taken care of, Johnny seems to be missing his wife as the person she is beyond taking care of him: “The way we’re living, it/You don’t seem to know what it’s done to you” (Wade 2.2). Throughout the play, we can see Judy high-strung and going above and beyond to be the perfect housewife. Johnny, on the other hand, seems to be lost in his role. He isn’t dominant, doesn’t want all that attention, and doesn’t manage to provide enough to financially support the household.

The gender roles they are trying to play are taxing on both Johnny and Judy in different ways. From the financial aspect, both roles are unattainable. Judy is trying to find a financial solution in order to keep their household going whereas Johnny feels the pressure to get the promotion as he’s the only one employed. Instead of the arrangement bringing them peace as it’s supposed to be “natural”, it creates resentment. Judy resents Johnny for not getting the promotion whereas he resents her for “not doing anything” the whole day while he’s at work.

8.6. Alex

8.6.1. Alex as Judy’s Opposite

One could say that Alex is everything that Judy isn’t. Alex is wearing a suit whereas Judy is wearing a 50ies dress, big jewelry and fur around her shoulders. Alex is ambitious, focused on her career. It’s visible she loves what she does and prioritizes work. Work stirs up things for Judy and Johnny in two ways: firstly, as a financial matter, secondly as Johnny starts having feelings for Alex. One could claim that one of the reasons for this is because Alex has the characteristics that Judy has lost in their arrangement. She’s independent, has quick comebacks, relaxed, but also focused on her work and life outside of her home.

Wade also playfully gave Alex a name that could be both a male and female one: “Alex your boss is a woman?” Johnny: Yes, they do let women be bosses now” (Wade 1.3). One can also question here why Judy was surprised in the first place that Alex was a woman. According to Kanter (qtd. in Blackstone 337), “women are expected to do different tasks and occupy different roles based on their sex”. Another aspect to be

observed here is that Johnny doesn't mind having a woman as his superior. On the contrary, he never says anything negative about Alex, even when she passes him up for the promotion.

Although one could expect Alex to be looking down on Judy or treating her as less than as she isn't employed, she never says anything against her. When visiting their home, she only has nice things to say about it and Judy: "Your house is incredible" Johnny: "I did say it's very fifties." Alex: "No, it's amazing" (Wade 1.4). Alex's reaction to the new environment is more curiosity whereas Judy's to her is discomfort. She takes off her jewelry and fur, even though Alex compliments her earrings. So, even though one could expect a tension between Alex and Judy, Alex entering the family home is actually revealing the tension between Judy and Johnny. One can notice Johnny's insecurities about their 50ies lifestyle now being on display in front of the modern aspect of his life – his boss and his workplace. The doubt if the two can really coexist is symbolically shown with him going to the bar and not taking his 50ies hat.

8.6.2. Alex: Challenging Judy's Limits of Acceptance

Throughout the play, we can see that the relationship between Johnny and Alex has been nothing but professional. Johnny has never acted on his feelings towards Alex. He mentions them to Judy, who in a passionate speech tells him to do whatever he wants, but be respectful enough to keep it hidden from her: "If you ever find yourself having feelings again/ Be man enough to keep it to yourself. However far it goes/If that's what it takes to keep this, this arrangement as you call it, then fine. Go off and do it" (Wade 2.2). Johnny doesn't say anything back. Here one can observe two things: firstly, Judy is the one saying she doesn't want to know, even though she has the option to leave or divorce Johnny if he really is cheating on her. This is something that wasn't always an option for women in the 50ies. Instead of the woman being the one who can't leave and the man being the one who does as he pleases, the roles are modified. Judy basically gives Johnny the permission to cheat, only asking him to hide it from her. However, Johnny neither wants such a permission nor is cheating on her in the first place.

Here we can observe the fluid aspect of performativity: Judy's decision on what she will allow is a choice, not something she has to accept. The second aspect of this scene is how the resentment is already piling up. Both characters are starting to become

overwhelmed with what their roles are demanding from them and see the role of their partner as less burdening.

Furthermore, here one can also discuss what being "man enough" (Wade 2.2) means for Judy. In her eyes, Johnny should keep what he does to himself, even if that includes cheating on her. Infidelity is portrayed as "his business" that he needs to take care of, regardless of "how far it goes" (Wade 2.2). However, this stereotype of a man who does as he pleases, even if it hurts his wife, and keeps his thoughts and feelings for himself, doesn't work for Johnny. What he shared with Judy wasn't that he was having an affair with Alex, but that he had feelings for her. He saw that as a signal that something isn't right between them. Alex was for him a catalyst for reflection on their arrangement whereas for Judy it was a threat that can destroy it. Here again one can raise the question: Is their arrangement really that worthy that they should ignore their problems, just so they could keep it up? How far is Judy willing to go to maintain their 50ies "paradise"? It is clear from the beginning that Judy cares for Johnny and the idea of him cheating on her upsets her. Why would she then give him the permission to do as he pleases, as long as she doesn't know about it? As the play progresses, Judy makes bigger and bigger compromises, thinking she's protecting their 50ies lifestyle, which in her mind subsequently protects them as a couple.

8.6.3. Alex as a Catalyst: Questioning the Arrangement

What Alex does challenge isn't Judy herself, but the 50ies. To Judy's claim that there was more community before, people being nicer, she replies unless you were gay or black. To her asking if the TV was also something people had back then, since they have it in their home, Judy replies that some people did. So, here we can also observe how class plays into gender performativity. Judy and Johnny didn't choose the version of it that was hard, difficult, and experienced by people of lower class. Alex digs deeper, by asking about the use of hospitals and laptops. With this, even though it comes from a place of curiosity, she's challenging the whole concept of the arrangement. For Judy, it isn't an arrangement, "it's a marriage" (Wade 1.2). However, what Alex does with her questions is both underline the doubt Johnny is feeling towards it, as well as how idealistic Judy's version of the 50ies is. Judy's love for that period came from watching movies with her dad, stars like Doris Day and James Stewart, not from stories of people for whom

it was a lived experience. Judy explains Jivestock, a retro festival, by saying: “I like that it’s still our crowd. No tattooed rockabilly girls who can’t even pin their hair properly. Cheap polka dot dresses” (Wade 1.5). However, Alex points out that it’s still organized and promoted online. Whereas Alex calls Judy amazing, Judy calls Alex a workaholic in front of Marcus and Fran. Alex for Judy is a disruption: her appearance in hers and Johnny’s life challenges everything she’s desperately trying to keep, voicing the questions and thoughts in Johnny’s, but probably in her head as well.

8.7. Marcus

8.7.1. Marcus versus Johnny

Just like Alex is the opposite of Judy, we can say that Marcus is the opposite of Johnny. Marcus sees in Johnny a man who has everything he himself wants: being a husband that comes after work to a perfect home to a stay-at-home wife, whose only priority is him. The main difference between Johnny and Marcus is also the motivation for accepting or wishing such an arrangement. Johnny accepted it because it was something Judy wanted, whereas Marcus wants it so he could be the center of attention. Where they differentiate the most isn’t the surface, it’s their personalities. Johnny isn’t arrogant, passive aggressive or snarky. He feels uncomfortable being expected to fulfill the role of a traditional husband. His priority is much more Judy than having a perfect home. However, Marcus is the opposite and his constant snarky comments towards Fran show that he’s pushing this narrative as it would cater to him, rather than because of his care for Fran or their relationship. When Judy knocks Fran’s drink, he asks Fran what she’s done. This shows us that Marcus has a dominance over Fran that one doesn’t feel in Judy’s and Johnny’s relationship. As a reader, one could feel a discomfort regarding Marcus due to his comments. The overly highlighted way he talks to Judy also feels uncomfortable. However, it’s often overseen or ignored in the group, and Marcus is called a “good friend” and never openly criticized by his wife Fran.

8.8. Marcus and the Sexual Assault Case at Work

The most obvious form of misogyny is in different forms of violence against women, such as rape, sexual abuse and assault, and sex tourism (Gray 3710). The first discussion regarding Marcus being accused of sexual assault at work is between Fran, Judy and Sylvia. What Wade does is making this firstly a conversation between women only, which allows us to observe the differences in their use of language while discussing

the situation. Fran initially describes it as Marcus “having a bit of trouble” at work (Wade 2.3). Although both Judy and her describe Marcus as “huggy”, “tactile”, just being “a big teddy bear” (Wade 2.3), Fran still has her doubts and openly expresses them. All three women react differently to the situation: Fran wants to believe her husband, but still has her doubts, Judy has no doubt at all that Marcus is innocent and Sylvia is on the side of the victim.

8.8.1. Fran’s Reaction

Fran is able to question Marcus’s innocence, even though he's her own husband. This might lead the reader to believe that the reason for that is that subconsciously, she's aware of how he treats her. She also states that she can't help but wonder if he's different with other people than when he is with her. This space for questioning and awareness that just because someone treats you nicely, doesn't mean they treat everyone the same, differentiates Fran from Judy. One could claim that the reason for Judy's blindness is her own consumption with her 50ies fantasy, resulting in her losing perception of what is happening around her (for example, her not being aware that Castro died).

We can see all the stereotypical phrases used when women report sexual assault in the way Fran retells what Marcus has told her: the woman is out to “destroy him and bring the company down with her”, the reason why it had happened is because Marcus is “too trusting”, he would have “stopped straight away” if she only said something, he’s “hurt because she didn’t speak to him about it”, etc. (Wade 2.3). So, as a reader, we understand that something indeed did happen, however, Marcus interpreted it as nothing, even though he conveniently didn’t share what exactly he did. We can also see him and his feelings in the center of the story with complete disregard to the woman’s.

8.8.2. Sylvia’s Reaction

Sylvia is the one bringing the counter narrative to the conversation. She questions why a woman would even lie about something like that in the first place, considering the great personal risk that comes with it. She highlights the power dynamic of the situation, with Marcus being her boss: “She might have felt that if she said anything he’d have her removed, she might have been in fear for her job. We don’t have any idea what she might have gone through.” (Wade 2.3). Slyvia is also the only one showing any kind of compassion towards the woman. She counter argues the “ruining Marcus” idea with the woman just wanting to do her job “without being undermined or manhandled” (Wade

2.3). Sylvia explains how in the 50ies, groping at work was normal and least of women's problems, how it was legal of the husband to require sex whenever he wanted to, birth control or abortion weren't available, divorce wasn't an option. Finally, she tells Fran to listen to and trust her gut. There are two aspects to be observed here: firstly, Fran being able to have a say if she wants to stay with Marcus, secondly, women being able to report sexual assault.

In terms of class, we can also observe how gender plays a role here. Although both women and men were part of the working class, women were subjected in the 50ies to inappropriate behavior at the workplace based on their gender. Trying to do something about it could have resulted in sanctions or losing their job, which was a luxury many couldn't afford. Even today, Sylvia reminds Fran and Judy that the woman who reported Marcus was risking a lot by reporting him, referring to her job, reputation and social status.

8.8.3. Judy's Reaction

Manne defines sexism as "*rationalizing* and *justifying* patriarchal social relations" (79). The way Judy discusses the assault is in itself sexist: "What's happened to us if you can't put your arm around someone's shoulders without them crying assault?" (Wade 2.3). This feeds into the narrative that women reporting sexual assault are overreacting to simple, harmless gestures, as well as diminishes its importance by using dismissive language such as "crying assault". Without having any context, she sympathizes with Marcus, calling him "poor Marcus" and "old fashioned" (Wade 2.3). Here it also comes into question – what does old fashioned really mean for Judy?

Her inability to at least question Marcus's potential fault is best described by her saying "when they workout she was just looking for attention, money or whatever?" (Wade 2.3). This is her reply to Marcus saying "Hashtags flying around, people who've never met me" (Wade 2.3.), as a reference to the MeToo movement. Here one can notice that Marcus doesn't only have a problem with the woman who reported him, but with the whole movement. One form of misogyny is "the implicit or explicit male denigration and/or hatred of women, and latterly of feminism" (Code 291). Instead of Judy counter arguing that the movement isn't as banal as just "hashtags flying around" for no reason, she feeds into the negative narrative further. Some women gain benefits by supporting patriarchy with their actions (Bennett 56 – 8), and in the case of Judy, she gets the praise

and affirmation from Marcus – the only character in the play who seems to be celebrating her as a housewife. The point of the movement and of contemporary feminism isn't for women "to destroy" men and companies, seek attention, etc., but "to reverse this system", "to destabilize the structural ground on which a binary system is based on" (Phoca 46).

Another aspect of this is Judy saying "them" in "without them crying assault" (Wade 2.3). She makes a distinction between her and women like her – obedient, submissive, not causing problems where there's none, as society prefers women to be, and the "others" – the stereotype of women who report assault being attention-seekers and looking for money or something else.

She describes the woman who reported Marcus as the problem, forgetting that having the option to report is something much more available to her than to women before. Seeing that as something negative is a byproduct of patriarchal social constitution, where women are expected to be obedient and subservient to men. The more the play progresses, the more problems that women had to face before in the 50ies arise. As Sylvia puts it regarding the 50ies: "try being anything other than a straight white man and see if you still think it's utopia" (Wade 2.3). By trying to portray the 50ies housewife image as ideal and perfect, but failing at it, Judy's character actually has the function to point at and highlight all the discrepancies of the concept that women had it perfect, nothing had to change back then, and especially shouldn't nowadays.

8.8.4. Marcus and Judy

Judy idolizes what working for Marcus would be like: "First line of defense, a tiger when you need one, pussycat the rest of the time. AND maybe it's a romantic idea, I just quite like the thought of working on one of those old typewriters, cardigan round my shoulders, you know?" (Wade 2.5). Judy doesn't dream about the actual work of a secretary, but her romanticized version of it, even though she's aware that Marcus has been accused of inappropriate conduct at work. Marcus firstly asks if it would be ok to compliment her clothes or how she looked like that day. He then continues with asking where she stands on contact – again giving blatant examples such as reaching for the same thing or putting his hand around her shoulder to congratulate. He chooses banal examples people often use as counterarguments when women discuss inappropriate behavior towards them at work – it's impossible to say anything nowadays, even give a simple compliment. One can also notice that at no point were his questions aimed at his or Judy's

work preferences. What follows is Marcus's monologue that explains what exactly has happened:

> I mean these women. The power they wield. And they know it, they know they can end you. Watching you all the time, just waiting for you to slip up, say something they can label sexist or racist, something they can enjoy being outraged about. Anything. You can't do anything now. Years where she doesn't object to a compliment, a hand on the arm, nor does she leave me out when she's looking for career advice, looking to *progress*, and doesn't mind doing it over a glass of wine that she's not paying for, the flinty little bitch. Then suddenly boosh it's everything exploded and it's not just now it's historical it's did you *ever*, has it *ever* happened, right back to the first boss who ever patted his PA on the bottom and said 'run along now' as a *joke*. As a joke. I wasn't exactly chasing her round the desk. I don't even find her attractive. She's completely flat-chested, she's no hips to speak of.
>
> (Wade 2.5)

This speech is full of stereotypes and sexist language. Just like when looking into origins of misogyny and its connection to fear and hate of female power, we have the image of "these" women and the power with which they "can end you". Moreover, he labels them speaking out on things as just complaining about whatever, therefore diminishing what they mark as sexist. Ultimately, he shows a complete dismissal towards boundaries – as the woman not complaining "for years" about his compliments or a hand on the arm means that she shouldn't be complaining now either. He's the one deciding it was a joke, not her, and therefore her complaints are an exaggeration. One of the ways in which sexism manifests itself is in "systemic discrimination, or failure to take women into account" (Code 291). Marcus never cares about what the women have to say or how they feel: be it Fran telling him multiple times to not make her uncomfortable with his comments in front of others or the woman at work who has already rejected him.

We don't hear the involved woman's name in the play, and in this scene, Marcus refers to her as a "flinty little bitch". The aggression in this wording also reflects the usual aggression of men when women don't respond to their actions in the way they expect them to or call them out on their behavior. To continue, he downplays the situation as "him not exactly chasing her around the desk". This feeds into the narrative that

harassment of women is always loud and aggressive, never subtle and unexpected. The image also has a cartoon feel to it, as if it was Tom and Jerry chasing each other around, again with the aim to downplay and mock the situation. Finally, Marcus insults the woman's physical appearance, making it seem like him being attracted to her and his own preference determine her beauty.

Instead of commenting on the numerous points of his speech, Judy's only reply is saying that all that isn't going to help his case, to which Marcus replies: "No, well. Among friends" (Wade 2.5). Here one can raise the question why Marcus even feels comfortable saying such things in front of others, especially another woman, and why his friends never say anything about it. To which extent does that enable such behavior? Marcus continues by saying: "I mean come on, a hand on your arse through several layers of clothing? Grow up. It's not like I fingered her, she'd already made it very clear she wasn't going to let me" (Wade 2.5). There's two points to be observed here. Firstly, the comparison of what is recognized as "bad enough" so that it could classify as sexual assault. According to Marcus, touching a colleague's ass at work isn't problematic, but fingering would be. Again, there's a full dismissal of what the woman is or isn't comfortable with, as well as what is generally well-known as inappropriate conduct at work. Secondly, we learn that Marcus already made advances at the woman, which is inappropriate as he's also her superior. Even though she has rejected him years ago, he still allowed himself to physically touch her without her consent.

However, despite all of this, Judy still replies that she would be willing to work for him. Since Marcus is suspended, he would pay her if "she wanted to put on a pencil skirt and a pair of heels I'd happily provide you with an old typewriter and an enthusiastic audience. On a day when no one could come home early or call round unexpectedly" (Wade 2.5). Judy's only question is if he would pay her for that, and he replies if that is what it takes. The fact that she would be expected to do this when no one is around already signals something is off about it. It also shows how Marcus sees his own dream version of the workplace – where the woman is more part of a sexual fantasy than an employee or colleague. Although Judy holds out her hand to him and he kneels in front of her, running his hand slowly up her leg, she does eventually stop him. One of the possible explanations why can be this being the final test of seeing how far Judy is willing to go to preserve her idyllic 50ies fantasy. We can notice she isn't attracted to Marcus – the only

question she had was if he would pay her. Her stopping him is in a way her illusion finally falling apart and her realizing it cannot continue.

8.9. Ideal Home Deconstructed

Towards the end of the play, it becomes clear that Johnny and Judy cannot move on as if everything is working out for them. The ideal home was supposed to be the frame of the ideal 50ies life they wanted to live. However, just like the 50ies were far from ideal, the house started to show its different aspects. The financial burden made it impossible to keep it up, but it also uncovered something else. Although Judy tries her best to be subservient, she is actually the only one fully aware of and taking care of the finances. At one point, Johnny finds out that she was hiding letters from the bank behind the sink. Conventionally, it would be the man who's in charge of the finances. However, what upsets Johnny isn't the fact that he wasn't aware of them as "the man of the house", but as Judy's partner, as they are meant to share things with each other. So, that same home that's supposed to be ideal is the place where things are hidden, both physically and between them. The home in a way absorbs Judy – she is lost in the pursuit of trying to take care of it perfectly, and Johnny feels it, too:

> Large parts of you seem to have got lost in the house somewhere. Your mind, your wit. The bit of you that could finish a conversation even when there's a dirty plate in the sink. The house looks perfect, you look perfect, but it's like the woman I love has been excavated from inside you. I don't want you agreeing with everything I say, I want you firing back in my face, because that's sexy and that's real and we've lost it.
>
> (Wade 2.6)

This is also a reflection of how much the burden of trying to keep the household perfectly taxes women – to the point where they are losing parts of their personality. Another part Johnny is speaking up about is that Judy playing the gender role of the agreeable, peaceful woman is not what he wants. He doesn't want her agreeing with him for the sake of it. On the contrary, he enjoys her talking back at him. Judy mentions all the things she has been doing for him, so he could "feel like a man" (Wade 2.6), but Johnny challenges what that even means: "What, a proper fifties man who has affairs and doesn't tell you? Why should you have to do this elaborate dance around my embattled masculinity? If that's what living in the fifties means then that's rubbish, isn't it? That's rubbish for both of us. It

makes us both smaller. I don't know how sustainable that is." (Wade 2.6). Playing these roles made them small in different ways. Judy lost her individuality, her personality, whereas Johnny feels incapable and babied. Oftentimes, women are seen as the ones who are responsible for the man feeling masculine with their actions. What they have lost as a couple is communication. When they did try to communicate, it would end in confrontation, such as the conversation about Johnny's feelings for Alex, their financial struggles, etc.

Johnny asks Judy openly – what is more important, the 50ies or him and her, saying for him it's the two of them. Judy replies that she doesn't know who she is without the 50ies. Judy is so deep in the role she has envisioned, of the perfect wife and housewife, that she has set aside all of her own needs, wishes and wants. This also shows how performing one's gender can completely dictate one's personality, resulting in them forgetting who they are as an individual. As Johnny highlights, they've set all these rules that cut them off from the things they might actually enjoy, such as the small act of him bringing her tea in bed. He sees their 50ies lifestyle more as something flexible, where they are the ones choosing what they want and what they don't: "We muddle a bit more, we share things a bit more, sometimes one of us does more or less sometimes we both do absolutely nothing and we spend the day in bed together, have someone bring us curry on a bike. If you fancy wearing a t-shirt one day it isn't a betrayal of everything we stand for" (Wade 2.6). As seen here, that flexibility refers to the division of housework between them, as well as to what they wear.

By breaking their own perception of what the 50ies should look like and allowing themselves to set the rules for themselves, both Judy and Johnny become freer, more themselves and connected. Their 50ies are basically them performing gender, what they think it looked like to be feminine or masculine back then. Them being able to see what works for them also shows that all those rules set around gender, from how one should dress to how they should treat their partner, are flexible and negotiable. Even more, Johnny's and Judy's characters show that there's no award for perfectly performing one's gender. On the contrary, by pushing oneself to accept what isn't necessarily working out for them as an individual, one feels unhappy, inadequate and under pressure. Their characters also show how performing one's gender as what society deems as adequate reflects on others. For example, Judy acting as the perfect housewife didn't make Johnny

happy – he actually preferred her doing less and being present more.

In coda we are able to see their own version of what works for them. Judy is back to work, Johnny is preparing breakfast, Judy leaves the dishes as there is no time. However, there's now more closeness between them. The play takes a full circle with this ending. It opened up with the seemingly idyllic 50ies working husband and housewife and now is finishing with both of them off to work, but in their 50ies inspired clothes, in the same home. One could say that there was a whole deconstruction of that home and what they thought their gender roles should be between those two points. This comes as a result of understanding that if gender roles are something that's learned, they can then also be unlearned (Blackstone 337), which in Judy's and Johnny's case means they are not tied to their arrangement.

It is also a result of them actively dismantling what they thought they had to be, how they had to perform their gender "properly" and finding their own unique solution as a team. As Butler explained, if we understand gender as a repetition of acts, not a fixed identity, this also means that there's space for gender transformation in the change of repetition (Butler, "Performative Acts" 520). As Johnny puts it: "Agreed? We look at everything – everything we do? We work it out together – no assumptions about what the other one wants, no eggshells, no egos. You and me and our beautiful house and we do it differently this time" (Wade 2.6). As Phoca explained, "if one accepts the idea that this dual understanding of gender shouldn't continue, what is also accepted is the vigilance and active participation in constructing new ways of configuring the contemporary subject" (46 – 7). Therefore, it is not simply enough to criticize the current system, but look into new ways of understanding gender and gender performativity, like Johnny and Judy did.

9. Conclusion

The analysis of gender roles in the play *Home, I'm Darling* has shown different ways of performing one's gender. The main couple, Johnny and Judy, put all their efforts in performing the roles of the perfect traditional husband and wife. Their friend Marcus dreams of having an arrangement like that, his wife Fran of being a "domestic goddess" like Judy. However, what this play allows us is to observe the consequences of blindly following what one's gender should look like.

First of all, even though Judy claims her role makes her happy, we can see throughout the play that she becomes isolated and resentful. Even though she claims it's her choice, that ideal of what a perfect wife should be wasn't set by her. Patriarchal society has built an image of the perfect wife as the one that always puts her husband and home before her own needs, all the way to the basic ones, such as Judy scrapping food from her plate and putting it onto Johnny's, even though his is loaded. The reason why patriarchal order is still upheld is exactly because of people often being unaware of it, and it being in the smallest of acts, such as the way a couple behaves at the dinner table. Patriarchal expectations are taxing on men as well, which can be seen in the figure of Johnny. His wife being solely focused on his needs doesn't make him feel manly or strong. On the contrary, he feels babied and like he's failing as a man because he can't support them on one paycheck. Furthermore, Marcus's figure gives us an example of a man pushing the narrative on Fran that she isn't a good wife because she doesn't live up to patriarchal standards. What's more, he wants her to be a housewife because he's aware it would benefit him highly, with complete disregard of her own needs and wants. This results in Fran internalizing the misogynistic message that she's failing as a woman.

What patriarchal society creates with its norms and expectations is space for sexism and misogyny. Marcus excessively compliments Judy as a housewife so that he could make sexist remarks about Fran, misogynistically celebrating one woman so he could put another one down. Furthermore, the sexual assault case shows how women internalize misogynistic messages that women who report sexual assault are attention-seekers wanting to destroy men. It even shows us how used women are to justifying men pushing the boundaries of what they deem acceptable or not when it comes to their bodies. The discussion between the female characters unravels how patriarchy also affects how women think without them being aware of it, using themselves sexist language towards

the woman who reported Marcus.

The play also shows how much of a privilege it is to be able to choose to be a housewife or not. Both couples are privileged in the sense that they have the freedom to make that choice. However, we also see how gender plays into this – Fran is expected to stay at home, not Marcus. In terms of power, we can notice a difference between the couples: Marcus tries to force Fran to become a housewife and keeps her in check with her comments, whereas Johnny doesn't feel comfortable with the expectation of him being the dominant leader in his home instead of an equal with his wife. In terms of the workplace, we can see how Marcus being in a position of power also gives him the power to disregard a woman's no. Fran working is seen as less than, even though she's an employed individual, just like her husband. Judy with her workplace being the household fails to make her and her partner happy, since she fails to live up to the unattainable patriarchal standards she tries to live by.

Judy and Johnny making the active decision to change their relationship and keep what works for them in their arrangement, but leave what doesn't, also opens up a big question: how much do we actually question our own gender roles? How much are our actions determined by what we think they should be in order to be societally acceptable? How much are they an active choice of ours? How much are we even aware that gender is actually a collection of acts, instead of who we are?

By creating what is described by Sylvia as "gingham paradise" and "living in a cartoon" (Wade 2.3), Wade provides us with a colorful world that seems to us like something we probably would never do ourselves. But as the play progresses, Judy's 50ies illusion becomes more and more realistic: women having to deal with inappropriate conduct at work, the burden to be a real "man" or "woman", women being criticized for both being "career women" or "just housewives", etc. By accepting things as they are, no questions asked like Judy, so we could have our own "paradise", what are all the injustices we are ignoring? What is the byproduct of not questioning anything and accepting behavior patriarchally established as "male" or "female" as naturally conditioned?

Even though the colorful, idolized 50ies might seem unrealistic, the problems the gender roles produce are something we can easily relate to or are familiar with. Therefore, in a way, this play is both a reminder and a warning – reminding us that we get to choose

our own truth of what performing gender means to us and a warning of the consequences of blindly accepting the socially imposed and patriarchally conditioned gender roles.

Finally, one can question – why the element of the past, with the 50ies? As Bennett pointed out, patriarchy still being alive today is a result of us failing to understand how it has functioned in the past. Until we understand its past first, "the lives of women and men will be twisted by the perverse strengths of patriarchal institutions" (Bennett 60). So, by taking the past and placing it into the present, Wade forces us to reflect, look at and analyze the structures within society we would often rather overlook, let alone change.

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Summary

Women at the Workplace: Gender Performativity in Laura Wade's *Home I'm Darling*

This master thesis looks into gender performativity by analyzing Laura Wade's play *Home I'm Darling.* More specifically, it dives into its characters and how they perform their gender roles on an everyday basis: in the context of work, at home, etc. It draws parallels between its female figures and how they perform gender differently. We also see their different preferences regarding work (being a housewife, career woman, etc.) and how it reflects on their lives and relationships. The analysis also uncovers different expectations, burdens and attitudes when it comes to the expectations of characters of what acting "like a real man" or woman means. It also shows how performing one's gender reflects directly on the people around them, and what the different consequences of that can be. The analysis also looks into stereotypes about men and women. Furthermore, it gives examples of sexist language and points of view, especially regarding sexual assault of women at work. Finally, this master thesis concludes with how the main points of the analysis can make us reflect on our own lives and perception of gender.

Keywords: gender performativity, Laura Wade, feminist theatre, sexism

Sažetak

Žene na radnom mjestu: rodna performativnost u drami Laure Wade *Home I'm Darling*

Ovaj diplomski rad bavi se rodnom performativnošću kroz analizu drame Laure Wade *Home I'm Darling*. Analizira sve likove pojedinačno te kako izvode svoje rodne uloge u svakodnevnom životu: na radnom mjestu, kod kuće, itd. Analiza uključuje povlačenje paralela između ženskih figura kako bi se vidjele razlike u njihovoj rodnoj performativnosti. Također vidimo njihove različite preferencije po pitanju posla (među likovima je domaćica, žena fokusirana na karijeru, itd.) te kako se one odražavaju na njihove živote i odnose. Analiza također otkriva različita očekivanja, teret i stavove kada promatramo što za likove znači ponašati se kao „pravi muškarac"ili žena. Također vidimo kako rodna performativnost ima izravan utjecaj na ljude oko nas i koje su njene posljedice. Također se navode primjeri stereotipa o ženama i muškarcima, te seksističkog jezika i stavova, posebice u kontekstu seksualnog napada na radnom mjestu. Kraj diplomskog rada fokusira se na to kako glavne točke i zaključci iz analize mogu potaknuti na refleksiju o vlastitom životu i percepciji roda.

Ključne riječi: rodna performativnost, Laura Wade, feminističko kazalište, seksizam