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I Love Lucy, That Girl, and Changing Gender Norms On and Off Screen, 1951-71

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Spring, 2018

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have helped me immensely throughout the thesis writing process. I would like to thank my thesis advisor Professor Clayton Koppes for all the insight as well as moral support that he has provided me both while writing this thesis and throughout my time here at Oberlin. I would also like to thank my thesis readers Professors Danielle Terrazas Williams and Shelley Lee for their comments on drafts. In addition, I want to thank the thesis seminar advisor Professor Leonard Smith for his assistance and for fostering a productive and kind environment in the thesis seminar. I owe many thanks to my fellow honors thesis colleagues as well. Their ideas helped me greatly and their encouragement kept me going. Finally, I need to thank my mom, Beth, my dad, Joe, and my brother, Frankie, as well as my friends for the continued love and support they give me. When I needed a shoulder to cry on or someone to laugh with they were and always are there to deliver, and for that I am forever grateful.

This thesis is dedicated to my two strong and loving grandmothers, Joyce Manca (1937-2015) and Anna De Leo (1930-2017).

Introduction

In July 1970, a Gallup poll asked men and women “Have you ever wished you belonged to the opposite sex?” Sixteen percent of women said yes, while only four percent of men said yes.¹ In that same year, Gloria Steinem wrote “Women don’t want to exchange places with men... Men assume that women want to imitate them... That is not our goal.”² Why then, does Lucy Ricardo exasperatedly ask “can’t you just pretend I’m a man?” when a male teacher won’t teach her a comedy routine because she’s a woman?³ Both *I Love Lucy* (1951-7) and *That Girl* (1966-71) explore female identity through their respective protagonists, Lucy Ricardo and Ann Marie. Relationships to men, domesticity, beauty and sexuality, and notions of equality are examined in both shows.

When female television characters of the 1950’s and 1960’s, such as Lucy Ricardo and Ann Marie, tried to enter male spheres, they were often unsuccessful, competing with forces that strove to keep women in their own sphere(s). This failed sphere-blurring reinforced separate gender roles, thus television ended up providing a sense of sanitized empowerment that ultimately allowed women some freedom *in* gendered norms, such as romantic relationships, domesticity, and femininity, but not *from* them. In the context of the women’s movement, mainstream media, specifically network television, showed restrictions that led to moderate and slowly-changing real-life gender politics in the United States.

¹ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 3, 1959-1971 (New York: Random House, Inc., 1972), 2260.

² Gloria Steinem, “What It Would Be Like if Women Win,” *Time Magazine*, August 31, 1970, in Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, eds., *Takin’ It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 419.

³ *I Love Lucy*, “The Ballet,” episode 119, directed by Marc Daniels, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Davis, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired February 18, 1952, on CBS.

This thesis is arranged into three distinct sections. The first section (chapters one and two) looks at important background history of women and television, as well as certain aspects of television as a medium that can be examined when analyzing it. Setting up this background is crucial to understanding how and why women on TV acted as they did. This cultural context also shows how mainstream media reacted to real-life changing gender politics. The second and largest part of the thesis is a close content analysis of *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* (chapters three, four, and five). The three chapters of this section are divided by theme. Chapter three looks at Lucy and Ann as relationship partners, as well as Lucy as an expectant mother. Chapter four examines Lucy and Ann as women in the domestic sphere. Chapter five focuses on portrayals of Lucy as a “traditional” woman versus Ann as a “modern” woman, and examines how these monikers hold up, concluding that Lucy as a “modern-traditionalist” and Ann as a “traditional-modernist” are more apt descriptions. These three chapters use theory laid out in chapter one, analysis from other academics, and various primary sources such as newspaper and magazine articles, essays, and documents from activists. By putting perspectives of the times up against analysis of the shows I examine if and how shows were engaging with real-life opinions and activism. The final section (chapter six) looks at only newspaper sources from the time in order to see how the shows were being discussed by critics, how Lucille Ball and Marlo Thomas were being portrayed, and how the notion of women in television overall was written about. By looking at what journalists and most likely viewers thought and wrote about these women, I hope to further develop the real-life surroundings that guided the TV-surroundings these women lived in and examine if and how newspaper discourse furthered gendered narratives shown on television.

I decided to focus on *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* because, looking at their basic premises, I see these shows as being apt embodiments of the decades in which they aired. *Lucy* as a 1950's housewife is stuck in domesticity, spending her days cooking, cleaning, and answering to her husband. *Ann*, meanwhile, represents the increasingly prevalent young woman of the 1960's who lives by herself and works for a living. Common historical narratives of the twenty-year period in which these shows aired espouse a notion of progress in women's roles. By "progress," I refer specifically to independence for women from strict social roles of mother and wife and strict social perceptions such as being emotional, irrational, weaker, and less capable. Understanding the idea of general progress in real-life, we can observe television's depiction of this same progress. From there, we can conclude how mainstream media marketed progress to the general public and what that says about overall perceptions of social change.

I had to decide how to pick which episodes to watch.⁴ I started watching *Lucy* first since it aired first. I wanted to pick the episodes based on popularity to see potential commonalities in what makes certain episodes popular. I consulted a "best of" video volume as well as online "best of" lists.⁵ I cross-referenced all the episodes on each list (there was a decent amount of

⁴ Before I could start watching and analyzing the shows, I had to decide how many episodes to watch of each series, and how I would pick the episodes. I looked at how many episodes each series had, and saw that *I Love Lucy* had 180 while *That Girl* had 136. I decided to watch one-fourth of each of the series, meaning I would watch 45 *Lucy* episodes and 36 *That Girl* episodes. These numbers seemed large enough that I would be able to see recurring tropes and themes throughout the series, but not too large to be unmanageable or get too repetitive.

⁵ Some lists were made voted on by real people, such as MeTV, "*Pick Me*" Results: *The 10 Best Episodes of "I Love Lucy"*, <https://metv.com/lists/pick-me-results-the-10-best-episodes-of-i-love-lucy> (Nov. 24, 2015); Ranker, *The Best I Love Lucy Episodes*, <https://www.ranker.com/list/best-i-love-lucy-episodes/reference>. Others were produced by major networks and not viewer-selected, such as CBS News, *10 of the Best "I Love Lucy" Episodes*, <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/best-i-love-lucy-episodes> (2016); ABC News, "*I Love Lucy*" Turns 65: *Unforgettable Episodes from TV's Iconic Comedy*, <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/love-lucy-turns-65-unforgettable-episodes-tvs-iconic/story?id=42810659> (Oct. 15, 2016).

overlap) and made a list of all the different individual episodes. I also looked through a “Best of I Love Lucy” collection on Amazon Prime⁶ and based on the provided synopses, picked episodes that had plots that related to women’s societal roles. Since *That Girl* was not as popular as *Lucy*, I could not consult “best of” video collections and articles. Instead, I looked through the synopses of all episodes provided on Amazon Prime⁷ and again picked ones that had themes that seemed most relevant to my analysis, such as domesticity, marriage, family, and femininity.

When watching the shows, I observed several elements. I looked at plot and what the storyline and ultimate moral of the story said about women and their roles or places in society. I was watching for dialogue and how the characters acted differently when they were around members of the same sex versus members of the opposite sex. I also watched for the use of audience laughter. Laughter delineates jokes, and it was interesting to see what the show wanted you to laugh at. I also observed physicality, specifically of Lucy and Ann, and how flamboyant physicality often diminished the respectable femininity of Lucy and Ann or other female characters.

I Love Lucy aired on CBS from 1951-1957 on Mondays at 9:00 PM. The show starred real-life couple Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz as fictionalized couple Lucy and Ricky Ricardo. Ricky is a nightclub singer and bandleader at a local club while Lucy is a housewife and, starting in the second season, a stay-at-home mom. Married for seven years when we meet them in the series premiere, Lucy and Ricky live in New York City, in a building owned by best friends and

The “best of” video collection consulted was *The Best of I Love Lucy Collection Volumes 1 and 2*, VHS, (Los Angeles, CA: Paramount Home Video, 2001).

⁶ *The Best of I Love Lucy*, (1952-57), Amazon Prime.

⁷ *That Girl*, (1967-71), Amazon Prime.

important secondary characters, Fred and Ethel Mertz, played by Vivian Vance and William Frawley. Fred and Ethel are older than Lucy and Ricky by what looks to be about ten or fifteen years, although none of the four characters' ages are ever specified. The basic plot of most episodes is that Lucy gets in some sort of trouble, either with Ethel or enlisting Ethel along the way to help her get out of it. She then has to figure out how to fix it before her husband finds out. Of course, most of the trouble involves domestic hijinks, and the consequences are rarely very dire.

That Girl aired on ABC from 1966-1971 on Thursday nights during various time slots for the first four seasons, with its fifth season airing Fridays at 8:00 PM. Marlo Thomas, daughter of popular TV star Danny Thomas, starred as Ann Marie, an aspiring actress who moves from her well-off hometown of Brewster, New York to New York City. Right away, she meets a young news reporter named Donald Hollinger, played by Ted Bessell, and the two date for the entire five-year run. They get engaged in the last season but never get married because Thomas, who was also an executive producer, decided to end *That Girl* before a wedding episode could ever be made.⁸ Even though Ann lives on her own, her overbearing father Lew Marie, played by Lew Parker, frequently checks in on her, sometimes unannounced, and worries often about his daughter living alone in the big city. Most episodes also focus on some sort of situation Ann has gotten herself into or is witness to, with the plot of the episode centering on how she's going to fix things. Although less domestically-based, like *Lucy*, these situations are rarely very serious.

⁸ Thomas formed her own production company, Daisy Productions, to produce *That Girl* since no other production company wanted to sign on for a five-year minimum contract that ABC stipulated. Being the head of the company, Thomas herself exercised a lot of control over *That Girl*, and has said that if the "story ended with a marriage they [young girls] might think that it meant that that was the only way to have a happy ending." (Emily L. Newman, "From *That Girl* to *Girls*: Rethinking Ann Marie/Marlo Thomas as a Feminist Icon," *The Journal of American Culture* 39, no. 3 (2016): 287-8, 290.)

Chapter one looks at the changing socioeconomic statuses of women from the immediate postwar period through the 1960's. This provides the context in which *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* were airing. As mentioned before, understanding what was happening in the real world informs us why what happened in TV shows did. It allows us to engage critically with Lucy's forced domesticity and Ann's supposed lack thereof, examining television's overall moderate stance on changing gender roles. It also allows us to see that real-life changing gender roles were not as dynamic as the common historical narrative often posits them.

Chapter One: Women's Changing Places, 1945-1970

Emerging from World War II, the United States was at a crossroads. The nation had just undergone over fifteen years of hardship, from the stock market crash of 1929 through war's end in summer of 1945. Postwar, gender roles in the US started to dramatically shift. The following chapter, as well as the paper in general, focuses primarily on the white middle-class woman. This is because the two lead women in my focus shows are both part of this demographic and because the historical narrative I want to examine pertains to white middle-class women.

There was some change in women's roles even before war's end. Since many men were fighting overseas, women had to take over for them at work, doing what were considered "inappropriate activities for women."⁹ However, women at work during wartime was not the idealized expression of empowerment it has since become. While working gave a sense of empowerment and fulfillment to some, others could not or did not work due to the lack of

⁹ Sara M. Evans, *Born For Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 219.

childcare provided or were hesitant to join because of the social implications of “crossing the boundary from acceptable female to decidedly male domains.”¹⁰

What societal restrictions women had broken through by working during wartime were soon essentially rendered moot with the forced removal of women from the workplace and the introduction of the New Look. The New Look of the late 1940’s accentuated the female figure, popularizing long dresses with large skirts. While there was some initial resistance, most American women soon embraced this look that represented “a visual symbol of [women’s] exit from the male industrial labor market.”¹¹ A new crop of beauty standards thus began. Family and home life grew in importance postwar due to the idea that “suburbia would serve as a bulwark against communism” and that a stable family would offer comfort as well as shield growing fears of war and annihilation.¹² A stable United States would come from strong citizens, and strong citizens could only come from strong families. Thus, women’s patriotic duty now manifested in the home, versus in factories during war. This version of republican motherhood¹³ was not new, although the consequences of not mothering properly seemed direr than ever. Between 1950 and 1960, however, white married women with children’s participation in service jobs deemed “appropriate”¹⁴ for them grew from 17 to 30 percent, although women’s work was still mostly seen as only “helping out” the family for economic

¹⁰ Evans, 221-5.

¹¹ Evans, 243.

¹² Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 14, 17-18.

¹³ Evans defines republican motherhood, which started during the Revolutionary War era, as women having a “patriotic duty to educate her sons to be moral and virtuous citizens” (57).

¹⁴ This included jobs in “soft industry” like clerking and being a secretary versus jobs in “heavy industry” which generally refers to factory jobs (Evans 252).

reasons versus working for their own fulfillment.¹⁵ Even when white women didn't work, they volunteered with church or community groups as a way to "fill their empty time."¹⁶

Changes in familial trends included increase in marriage rate, decline in marriage age, and increase in the birth rate. These trends generally happened right after WWII ended, but remained throughout the years following.¹⁷ These trends all play into the idea of family as stability in the Cold War. Starting a marriage earlier meant starting a family earlier, and "numerous children, like numerous commodities symbolized an abundant home."¹⁸ Simply put, abundance meant thriving. If a family had many children and modern appliances they were living to their fullest potential and they were objectively stronger and more successful than families who didn't. These homes also were for the most part created in the suburbs, another novelty. Suburbia was the perfect candidate for a new, abundant lifestyle. Not cramped like cities, suburbs were spacious and had homes with plenty of room for all sorts of appliances. Big open yards and quiet streets were perfect for children to play together safely. However, these suburbs isolated families, leading to the rise of the nuclear family versus the extended family. While suburbs were good for the family ideals that the Cold War era pushed, they isolated women.

Female sexuality also underwent transformations in the postwar era. Sexuality was all right if it kept a marriage strong. Otherwise, it was dangerous, because sexual deviancy was seen as overall deviancy, and deviant Americans would not best the Russians and communism. Women especially were expected to control their sexuality, and there was a fear that "The

¹⁵ Evans, 252, 254.

¹⁶ Evans, 267.

¹⁷ May, Tables 1-4, xii-xv.

¹⁸ May, 140.

greater social freedom of women has more or less inevitably led to a greater degree of sexual laxity, a freedom which strikes at the heart of family stability.”¹⁹ Women were allowed to express their sexuality, but only once they were securely married. There was some degree of “sexual liberalism,” which encouraged “non-coital forms of pre-marital sex,”²⁰ but the main domain of sexuality was still expected to be marriage.

In the 1960’s, women were moving away from the mother-like community organizing of PTAs and church groups that they had done in the 1950’s and were starting to organize more broadly. This is generally attributed to “consciousness-raising,” exemplified by Betty Friedan’s identification of the “problem that has no name” in her 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*. Books like Friedan’s allowed women to realize that they were not alone in feeling unfulfilled by their relegation to the private domestic sphere.

Inspired by this as well as the ongoing black civil rights movement, women started to push for change at the national level. The creation of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 was the first nation-wide group to “articulate the clear dilemmas of professional women for whom continuing discrimination violated deeply held convictions about their rights to equal treatment.”²¹ NOW put out a bill of rights in 1967. Some amendments included in it were, “I. Equal Rights Constitutional Amendment; II. Enforce Law Banning Sex Discrimination in Employment; III. Maternity Leave Rights in Employment and in Social Security... VIII. The Right of Women to Control Their Reproductive Lives.”²² These overall ideas of fairness in the workplace and agency in reproductive rights were two of the most important ideas of the

¹⁹ Reuben Hill and Howard Baker, eds., *Marriage and the Family* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1940), in May, 59.

²⁰ May, 102.

²¹ Evans, 277.

²² “NOW Bill of Rights,” in Bloom and Breines, 417-8.

mainstream women's movement. Cementing these ideas through an organization comes in conjunction with an increase in women working. In 1960, about 23 million women participated in the workforce while 32 million did in 1971, a five percent increase.²³ Thus, while women in the 1950's had made some progress by entering the workforce in increasing numbers as well as engaging in community activism, women's rights entered the national stage in the 1960's, leading to an increased dialogue about the issues they faced.

As mentioned before, these trends more or less stayed the same throughout the 1950's, and started to change in the 1960's. Marriage rate decreased, marriage age increased, and birth rate declined, with divorce rates also increasing slowly in the early 1960's and more quickly in the latter half of the decade. With these changes came others, such as increased acceptability of sex before marriage and of living together before marriage.²⁴ With regards to sexuality, the licensing of the birth control pill in 1960 by the Food and Drug Administration was revolutionary. Easy to take and discreet, the pill became the birth control of choice for many women and made other kinds of birth control like the diaphragm seem old-fashioned.²⁵ However, the sexual revolution that came with the rise of counterculture was not all encompassing. A 1969 Gallup poll showed that 68 percent of those surveyed believed that pre-marital sex was "wrong." With the majority of people over thirty believing it was wrong but adults in their twenties being "fairly closely divided on their opinions."²⁶ In addition, women were somewhat excluded from this burgeoning sexual revolution, often having to abide by

²³ This compared with 17 million women working in 1948 growing to 23 million in 1960 shows that women were entering the workforce at a greater rate throughout the 1960's. (United States Department of Labor, *Women in the Labor Force*, https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/NEWSTATS/facts/women_lf.htm#one,)

²⁴ May, 198-199.

²⁵ David Allyn, *Make Love Not War, The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History* (New York, Little, Brown, and Co., 2000), 34.

²⁶ Gallup, 2216.

older-fashioned 1950's notions of sexual freedom discussed earlier.²⁷ While notions of female sexuality evolved over the course of the 1950's and 1960's, there were still restrictions on how women could and should express their sexuality.

While the general idea of progress in women's liberation over the 1950's and 1960's is accurate, it is oversimplified to think of the 1950's as a time of no progress and the 1960's as a time of only progress. Women entered the workforce in growing numbers throughout the 1950's and did some organization, although it was often limited to the local level and generally done through PTAs or church groups. In the 1960's, other social movements, such as the civil rights movement and student movement often excluded women. The mainstream women's movement itself was also often exclusionary towards women of color and queer women. In short, progress was not as linear as it is commonly believed. How did television respond to these changing gender roles, and did it further notions of progress or hinder them? That question will be explored throughout the rest of the thesis.

Chapter Two: Television as a Medium

Television ownership grew rapidly after World War II. When television first started in the late 1940's, there were about 60,000 televisions in the US. In the first half of 1950, three million sets were sold. Two thirds of households owned televisions by 1955, and that number went up to 86% in 1960.²⁸ Television was not introduced without controversy, though. There were concerns over how TV would fit into and affect family life. It was seen as something that could either bring the family together or ruin family relationships and bring productivity in the

²⁷ As Sara Evans notes, the sexual revolution often applied more to men than women, with the notion of sexual "freedom" becoming more "male-defined" (282).

²⁸ Rowan Howard-Williams and Elihu Katz, "Did Television Empower Women?: The Introduction of Television and the Changing Status of Women in the 1950s," *Journal of Popular Television* 1 no. 1 (2013): 9.

home to a standstill.²⁹ Lynn Spiegel examines certain expectations audiences had for TV in the postwar era. She details the balance that was expected between older forms of entertainment like vaudeville and the newer, more intimate brand of technology television could provide. With regards to family sitcoms, the balance came in having the theatricality of vaudeville – without the adult humor – transported into domestic situations.³⁰ Regulatory bodies known as Standards and Practices had been around since television’s earliest days in the 1920’s. Regulation was important due to television’s direct dissemination into the home “unforeseen, often unbidden, and sometimes unwelcome.”³¹

An integral book to my thesis has been Lynn Spiegel’s *Make Way for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*. Spiegel spends time looking at family sitcoms in particular, and observes how theatrical displays of domesticity, which occur frequently when Lucy or Ann get into some sort of crazy situation, show the artifice inherent in gender roles and domesticity. Spiegel argues that domesticity is performed in real life and in TV life, and its performance on TV life exposes its real-life performative aspects.³² Spiegel argues that recognizing this construction would weaken rigid gender roles. I believe that this might be true, but that over-the-top theatricality and entertainment could distract viewers from serious reflection. In addition, Lucy and Ann don’t always get to perform domesticity as they want when they are held back by old gender roles or their surroundings, which I would argue strengthens traditional gender divisions.

²⁹ Lynn Spiegel, *Make Way for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 3.

³⁰ Spiegel, 142.

³¹ The Museum of Broadcast Communications, *Standards and Practices*, <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/standardsand.htm>.

³² Spiegel, 165.

While the basic premise of both shows is fairly standard, there are interesting nuances that make Lucy, Ann, and the people they surround themselves with not necessarily average Americans. For starters, there is a pervasive theme of show business or otherwise glamorous jobs throughout both series. Ricky is a nightclub entertainer, Lucy is obsessed with breaking into show business, and Fred and Ethel both have backgrounds in the industry. Ann is trying to become an actress and Don is a reporter for a New York City magazine, a rather fast-paced and exciting job, unlike average office or factory jobs most viewers would probably have. According to Spiegel, shows like *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* are self-reflexive, meaning that they show characters who are involved with entertainment. This self-reflexivity increases the potential for theatricality.³³ This theatricality “welcomed viewers into a simulated neighborhood where everyone was putting on a show.”³⁴ Viewers would recognize the surroundings and be pleased with the entertainment factor of these shows. Theatricality, then, worked to increase notions of relatability. *New York Times* TV writer Jack Gould mused that part of the reason for *Lucy’s* success was that “Its theme and setting are plausible and the audience can easily identify itself with them. The plot is set within the framework of a warm and recognizable premise.”³⁵ Relatability increases viewership and the impact of certain shows, and it also places the audience in a familiar situation, which can work to display and uphold the status quo, especially vis-à-vis gender roles.

There are other discrepancies between real-life and life on these shows. Lucy is married to a Cuban man, thus Lucy and Ricky are not the middle class white couple that is so often

³³ Spiegel, 160.

³⁴ Spiegel, 165.

³⁵ Jack Gould, “Return of ‘I Love Lucy’ to C.B.S. Establishes Lucille Ball as Top-Notch Video Comedienne,” *The New York Times*, September 17, 1952.

associated with the 1950's. In addition, all three main couples on both shows do not exactly follow the popular family trends of the time. Fred and Ethel are older and have no children. By the time Lucy and Ricky have a child in the second season they have been married for eight years and are not the young parents that were typical at the time. It's unclear exactly how old Ann and Don are when they get engaged in the final season of *That Girl*, but they are certainly older than the median ages for marriage of men (23.1) and women (20.9) in 1971³⁶ when the season aired.

Television logistics dictated some of the characters' situations. Since Fred and Ethel do not have any children, they are free to be wherever the episode needs them to be and do whatever the episode needs them to do without having to explain where the child or children are. Lucy and Ricky having a pregnancy and baby on-air was good for ratings, and also took advantage of Lucille Ball's real-life pregnancy,³⁷ as will be discussed in chapter three. Ann and Don only dating allows for plots examining tension between Ann and Don, as well as tensions between Ann's father and Don, as will be discussed in chapters and three and four, respectively. These divergences from real life are also intended to entertain. Ricky's Cuban background opens up an alley for many jokes about his accent and misuse of the English language. Children who aren't there or aren't often seen allow the characters to do what they want more or less unburdened while still maintaining the relatability of parents. And as Sam

³⁶ Sheri Stritof, *Estimated Median Age of First Marriage By Gender: 1890-2015*, The Spruce, <https://www.thespruce.com/estimated-median-age-marriage-2303878> (April 4, 2018).

³⁷ Stephanie E. Bor, "Lucy's Two Babies: Framing the First Televised Depiction of Pregnancy," *Media History* 19, No. 4, (2013): 464.

Denoff, co-creator of *That Girl* said, “if a main character has responsibility to someone they’re funnier.”³⁸

Another book that has been instrumental in my thesis is Joshua Meyerowitz’s *No Sense of Place*, which looks at media’s influence on social structures. Meyerowitz argues that electronic media blurs the line between social spheres that were once separate.³⁹ He outlines the specific gender roles and perceptions that society held, which I have used to measure levels of subversion. He argues that TV blurred the separate spheres of men and women, i.e. the public and domestic, respectively, regardless of how “sexist” or not the content was. Television merely showing men and women’s differing roles affected their sense of separation and their rigidity, for now children could see both genders’ roles.⁴⁰ Sphere-blurring happens often in *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl*. I think it is important to note how the sphere-blurring ends, i.e. if the spheres separate back out or not. I also believe that it is important to analyze the sexist content that Meyerowitz mentions, because television showed sexism with few consequences.

In addition, a book that directly addresses notions of subversion and progression in early television is Cary O’Dell’s book *June Cleaver Was a Feminist!* O’Dell argues that women in early TV have been treated unfairly by historians who have often labeled them “‘oppressed,’ ‘dumb,’ or ‘sexist.’”⁴¹ With regards to *I Love Lucy*, he argues that Lucy was a rebellious woman who wouldn’t allow herself to be totally controlled by Ricky. He goes so far as to say that Lucy “embodied all the tenets of modern feminism.”⁴² When discussing Ann and *That Girl*, O’Dell

³⁸ O’Dell, 166.

³⁹ Joshua Meyerowitz, *No Sense of Place* (London: Oxford University Press, 1985), 5.

⁴⁰ Meyerowitz, 200, 214.

⁴¹ Cary O’Dell, *June Cleaver Was a Feminist! Reconsidering the Female Characters of Early Television* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Company, Inc., 2013), 5.

⁴² O’Dell, 75.

introduces the two common beliefs that Ann was either a “feminist landmark” or was “undermined” due to the presence of Don and her father.⁴³ O’Dell sides with the former, and cites the fact that she lives alone and not under the presence of a “father figure or pseudo-chaperone.”⁴⁴ I mostly disagree with O’Dell. I believe he takes too simplistic of a look at the women he describes, and discounts (or neglects to mention) the surroundings that they find themselves in. Lucy and Ann can be as “feminist” as they want, but they are still surrounded by people, mostly men, who actively try to hold them back. O’Dell bemoans the usage of the words “oppressed, dumb, or sexist” to describe the women in these shows, yet he neglects to realize that their surroundings are what force them to be seen as such.

The three books discussed above are the most used in my thesis. In general, Meyerowitz and Spiegel don’t spend much time on close analysis of shows, and O’Dell doesn’t do much with theory. I hope to bridge the gap by using Meyerowitz’s and Spiegel’s theory to inform the close reading I will be doing of *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl*. Furthermore, I will take a more holistic look at women on television than O’Dell does, analyzing not just the women themselves, but the settings they find themselves in and the people, specifically the men, they surround themselves with. Both *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* are shows that have certain social divergences that add to their theatrical value – and work logistically – but still maintain a strong enough air of familiarity that they don’t push the envelope on societal norms too much. Meyerowitz discusses how social movements always have to present themselves as “not too revolutionary,” or else the “average citizen” would fear that old societal norms would be

⁴³ O’Dell, 166.

⁴⁴ O’Dell, 166.

replaced with a “strange and deviant future.”⁴⁵ Television is no different. Beholden to the funding of advertisers, TV had to produce content that would keep the most people watching, meaning ideas had to be kept as mainstream as possible. This means that these shows can show partially liberated women like Ann and, even to some extent, Lucy, but not in too radical of a way that might offend the general public. In television, moderation is key.

Chapter Three: Lucy and Ann as Women in Relationships

Lucy and Ann both function prominently as women in romantic relationships of varying degrees. Lucy is married; Ann is a girlfriend for most of the show and then fiancée for the final season. Lucy is also portrayed as a mother-to-be, with motherhood being a necessary association with wife at the time. Meyerowitz lays out what he calls “traditional conceptions of femininity” which are “passivity, limited ability, ‘irrationality,’ intuitive thinking, closeness to nature, mysteriousness, and low evaluation of self.”⁴⁶ When Lucy and Ann are portrayed as women in relationships, they often abide by some of these conceptions. These relationships, made up of a man and a woman, are where the female and male spheres have the most overlap. Meyerowitz argues that the blurring of spheres leads to relaxed gender roles, but in this case, when the spheres blur, they always separate out again. In addition, the blurring highlights the discrepancies between male and female spheres and thus asserts an inherent naturalism in the separation.

Some episodes of both shows deal with fears of infidelity or the relationship’s dissolution. In *I Love Lucy*’s “The Girls Want to Go to A Nightclub”⁴⁷ both Lucy’s and Ethel’s

⁴⁵ Meyerowitz, 196.

⁴⁶ Meyerowitz, 206.

⁴⁷ *I Love Lucy*, “The Girls Want to Go to a Nightclub,” episode 101, directed by Marc Daniels, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired October 15, 1951, on CBS.

marriages are thrown into flux. It's Fred and Ethel's anniversary. Fred wants to go to the fights to celebrate the "18 year old tragedy" while Ethel wants to go to a nightclub since they rarely go out dancing anymore. Lucy speculates that "ever since I said 'I do' there are so many things we don't," highlighting a sense of entrapment in marriage. Ricky sides with Fred and Lucy sides with Ethel, naturally. The sexes agree to split up and go off to the different activities separately and with new dates. Disguised as hillbillies, Lucy and Ethel find a way to end up as Fred and Ricky's new dates, not the beautiful young women that the guys expected and – Fred believes – deserved.⁴⁸ Spiegel discusses how female comedians often disguised themselves as ugly and then acted "bawdy" and "mannish." This managed to keep notions of traditional femininity separate from the more wild behavior of these less feminine women.⁴⁹ Thus while Lucy and Ethel attempt to teach Fred and Ricky a lesson, they do it in a way that still preserves their femininity. When they act out they are less female, meaning they don't defy female passivity completely. In addition, Lucy and Ethel doing something places the impetus on the women to control their men and their marriages, absolving men of any responsibility to work with their wives to keep them happy and their marriage working. They're found out and in the end all four end up at the fights. In the last shot of the episode, Lucy and Ethel look defeated and bored sitting next to an excited Ricky and Fred.

In *That Girl's* "Ann vs. Secretary,"⁵⁰ Don gets a new, young, and beautiful secretary named Pat, much to Ann's chagrin. Ann indirectly complains about it to Don, asking him a series of questions about her while the audience laughs at each one, indicating that Ann is

⁴⁸ Fred: "We owe it to ourselves" to get these new, pretty dates.

⁴⁹ Spiegel, 153.

⁵⁰ *That Girl*, "Ann Vs. Secretary," episode 311, directed by Hal Cooper, written by Ruth Brooks Flippen, December 4, 1968, on ABC.

being silly for getting so caught up in this. O'Dell claims that Don is dependent on Ann because he often fears that Ann will leave him, but in this case, and in several others,⁵¹ Ann fears the Don will leave her. Ann's complaints are not unjustified, however, for in a scene between Ann and Pat, Pat hints that she is interested in stealing Don. Don and Pat go on a trip for a story together, leaving Ann distraught, especially when her close friend Ruth tells her that she thinks Ann and Don are done since he is clearly in love with Pat. Meanwhile, Pat does come on to Don, but he lets her down. At the same time, Ann had been planning to break up with Don based on what Ruth told her, and had already moved his stuff out of her apartment. In the end, Don hires an older woman to be his new secretary and all is well.⁵² Only at the end does he acknowledge that Ann was right,⁵³ once concrete action was taken by Pat to prove that Ann was rightfully fearful.

Both episodes deal with the women being afraid of other women stealing their partners. Lucy and Ann both exhibit irrationality, but Ann's irrationality renders her passive while Lucy's does not. One would expect the opposite, with the housewives of the 1950's being the submissive ones and the independent women of the late 1960's being the ones to take a stand. Lucy and Ann, along with their partners, remain in the gendered dynamic of man as rational and women as irrational or emotional.⁵⁴ There is also an examination of female alliance versus competition in both episodes. Lucy/Ethel and Ann compete – against fictional and real women,

⁵¹ "All About Ann," "To Each Her Own," "She Never Had the Vegas Notion, Parts 1 and 2," "I Am a Curious Lemon."

⁵² Ann: "What every wife and girlfriend secretly has in mind" [when picturing their husband's/boyfriend's ideal secretary].

⁵³ Says she isn't a "little girl" but a "mature woman" for how she handled whole thing, and tells her he's "proud of her." It all comes off a little paternalistic.

⁵⁴ Meyerowitz, 205-6.

respectively – for their male partners.⁵⁵ Both notions of competition and alliance lead to irrationality, however. The potential for competition causes Lucy and Ann to seek out female alliances. Ethel helps Lucy take action while Ruth is half the reason why Ann overreacts. Despite their seemingly opposite impacts, both episodes suggest that when women get together, a snowball effect is created where female alliances exacerbate what one woman already feels. Their male partners in the shows are either oblivious or ambivalent about their female partners' fears. Yet, the technology of television allows for real-life men to see female alliances in a way that they were not available to them in real-life.⁵⁶ It's hard to say how real men reacted to these episodes, but it is worth wondering what they would have thought seeing these female alliances that promoted irrationality.

Episodes in both series show the men taking direct control over the women. In "Lucy's Schedule"⁵⁷ Lucy is unable to be punctual, so Ricky makes her create a schedule that he'll enforce. This ties in with a promotion to club manager that Ricky tries to get, and he sees Lucy's lateness as holding him back.⁵⁸ Lucy negatively affects Ricky's separate work sphere, and this sphere-blurring is an issue. As a result, Ricky "violates"⁵⁹ Lucy's domestic sphere. Lucy is willing to follow Ricky's rules, but will subvert them in order to make her point that she thinks he's being unfair. She makes Ricky's breakfast the night before and keeps it in the freezer, rendering it frozen solid and impossible to eat, much to Ricky's chagrin and the audience's

⁵⁵ Meyerowitz posits the reason for competition as being isolation of women in the private sphere. Because they are not around other women, they understand them less and therefore fear them (207).

⁵⁶ This relates to Meyerowitz's theory of TV blurring female and male spheres.

⁵⁷ *I Love Lucy*, "Lucy's Schedule," episode 133, directed by Marc Daniels, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired on May 26, 1952, on CBS.

⁵⁸ When Lucy and Ricky are late for dinner with the man who is considering him for the promotion, they have to explain why they're late, prompting the man to say that "If a man can't run his own home he can't run a nightclub."

⁵⁹ Meyerowitz, 201.

laughter. There's also female alliance in this episode. Once Lucy is put on the schedule, Ethel and Mrs. Littlefield, the wife of the man who is considering Ricky for the promotion, worry that their husbands will be inspired by Ricky and will put them on schedules as well. They rush their husbands through a dinner that the six of them have together, putting their food on the table for only a second before taking it away, all in the name of "sticking to the schedule."⁶⁰ Once the dinner happens, Mr. Littlefield decides that Ricky has been too strict with Lucy, and only then does Ricky decide to scrap the schedule.

This female alliance is in direct response to the men and their attempts to intrude into the women's sphere. This sphere-blending, though, ultimately works to retain their separation. This example of women working together to get men to treat them better is perhaps not what the burgeoning women's movement had in mind when considering how to overthrow patriarchy, but it's a start. In the end, it isn't Lucy's schemes that do the trick, but the word of the *man* Ricky tries to impress, who was undoubtedly frustrated by Lucy's shenanigans, but who still had the final word.

That Girl's instance of overt male control is slightly different and comes in the episode "At the Drop of a Budget."⁶¹ Ann gets a role that allows her some spending money, but immediately asks Don to help her make a budget and oversee it. Ann's inability in this episode is keeping her finances in order. Ann attempts to enter into the male-sphere of finance,⁶² but doesn't trust herself enough to do it on her own. Don is hesitant believing this will cause issues

⁶⁰ Lucy, Ethel, and Mrs. Littlefield keep repeating this throughout the scene as justification for their erratic behavior.

⁶¹ *That Girl*, "At the Drop of a Budget," episode 405, directed by Russ Mayberry, written by Ed Scharlach and Warren Murray, aired October 16, 1969, on ABC.

⁶² Personal finances generally being dictated by jobs, and jobs falling into the public sphere, finance is linked to the male-dominated public sphere.

in their relationship,⁶³ but relents when Ann says she needs his “better judgment” on finances. The main point of the episode is that Ann accidentally gets hypnotized so that literally any time a hat falls on the ground, she has to buy something, but what is more important than that is the idea that Ann asks Don to control her finances since she thinks that he as a man will be better at it. Don goes back and forth in the episode, chiding her for buying things while also reminding her that it is her money and she can spend it how she pleases, as if he can’t decide whether or not Ann is really capable of managing her own money.

These two episodes differ in that Lucy resists this method of control and attempts to subvert it in order to be freed, while in *That Girl*, Ann asks for it. At first glance, it seems that these roles should be reversed, and Ann as the modern woman of the 1960’s should be fighting against potential male control. However, Ann’s main connection to the male sphere is Don, thus she relies on him to help her steer through it. Meanwhile, Lucy deals with Ricky’s intrusion into her domestic sphere, thus she would want to maintain the separation. Overall, in both episodes, both spheres and gender roles are ultimately kept separate. At the end of “Lucy’s Schedule,” the spheres separate again, when Mr. Littlefield tells Ricky to back off of controlling Lucy, pushing him away from the private sphere. The same thing happens in “Drop of a Budget” when Ann loses the job and no longer has a need to be in the financial sphere. While the men exert various degrees of control over their respective partners, the ultimate message of both these episodes is that there is a natural boundary between male and female spheres.

Overall, these episodes share several commonalities. They express anxieties surrounding female alliance. This shows that the consciousness-raising that would come to

⁶³ Don cites that “You never teach your girl how to drive or handle her financial affairs.”

dictate much of the beginning of the women's movement was shown as being potentially dangerous on TV. In addition, these episodes show that the men exercise a certain degree of control over the women no matter what. There are also times when it seems like Lucy's and Ann's courses of action should be switched due to the times each woman lives in. This shows that while we can understand generalized gender norms of certain time periods, it's inaccurate to expect that every woman will abide by these generalizations strictly, on TV and in real-life. Considering television as a mainstream medium intended to appeal to the greatest audience by taking moderate stances on potentially controversial topics, these overarching similarities show that while gender politics certainly changed over the decades in which these shows aired, thinking of this change in terms of absolute progress over time is inaccurate.

Lucy's and Ann's relationships differ in important ways. There is the question of marriage for Ann and Don, and this leads to examinations of the potential fears associated with an upcoming wedding. Lucy also differs from Ann in that she is shown as being pregnant. These two respective storylines are emblematic of the times in which they were written and aired. It is important that Lucy has a baby because child-rearing in the early 1950's was not only popular but associated with growing American values. *That Girl's* examination of marriage, meanwhile, is more critical, representing the shift away from publicly idealized marriage in the 1950's. In both these storylines, spheres are blurred again, but like previous episodes, they ultimately separate back out.

In the fifth season premiere “Counter-Proposal,”⁶⁴ Ann and Don finally get engaged after dating for four seasons. The specific plot of the episode is not very important, but smaller portions of it are, such as when Don tells Ann that the ring on her finger says, “I belong to Donald Hollinger,” reaffirming the traditional belief that husbands own their wives. Despite the fact that Ann was so hesitant towards marriage in other episodes, as will be discussed later, she now embraces it full on, saying that “an engagement ring is such an important thing to a girl,” and affirming common notions of women aspiring primarily to marriage.⁶⁵

On *I Love Lucy* the characters make countless cracks about their marriages, and the overall sentiment is that marriage is a drag. While marriage was more important during the *Lucy* years, due to its associations with strong American family values that were imperative during the advent of the Cold War, *Lucy* treats it in a much less magical way than *That Girl* does. While Lucy and Ricky are certainly not miserable, they fight and disagree with each other, and they make plenty of jokes about being unhappy. In a way, marriage is a given in *Lucy*, and thus it is treated in a more quotidian way. For Ann and Don, marriage is the next, exciting chapter in their relationship after a long buildup. They will struggle with the notion of marriage, but in different ways than Lucy and Ricky do. Ann and Don worry about the idea of marriage itself, representing the less idealized notions of marriage gaining ground in the 1960’s.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *That Girl*, “Counter Proposal,” episode 501, directed by Saul Turteltaub, written by Saul Turteltaub and Bernie Orenstein, aired September 25, 1970, on ABC.

⁶⁵ Evans discusses how even when women were in college, they would often drop out in order to marry and pursue domesticity full-time. In fact, women were encouraged to find husbands while in college. This shows that even when pursuing something that would not necessarily lead toward marriage, i.e. school, women were still focusing on (and supposed to be focusing on) marriage (68-9).

⁶⁶ In *Homeward Bound*, May examines the Kelly Longitudinal Study. This study was done by E. Lowell Kelly, a University of Michigan psychologist, in 1955 and was sent out to 600 white middle-class men and women, or 300 couples. She found that many women (and some men) expressed discontentment with their familial or domestic situation, but often did nothing to improve it, instead believing that things were supposed to be that way. While the overall movement of consciousness-raising associated with second-wave feminism of the

In “Battle of a Single Girl,”⁶⁷ Ann reveals to a friend that she thinks she “made a terrible mistake” by agreeing to marry Don. She says that ever since they got engaged she has been nervous and “shrieky,” as well as fighting more with Don. This is all about Ann’s apparently hysterical and irrational emotions, and she decides to remedy them by going to couple’s counseling, an idea that Don thinks is ridiculous since they aren’t even married yet. This is a blatant example of male rationality versus female irrationality. When they go to the counselor, they are hesitant to reveal what “irritates” them about one another, and when they later reveal that there are things, they get into a fight. When they make up, Ann tells Don that he is “perfect,” glossing over the fact that she had issues with him and instead taking the easy way out and pretending that nothing ever happened.

This episode explores Ann’s emotionality, which unlike in “Ann vs. Secretary” results in her taking action. Passivity ultimately reigns, though, because at the end she does not really try to fix potential problems that she and Don have. While she fought Don on his resistance to counseling, she backs off in order to keep their relationship smooth. This episode also reveals the deep communication issues that Ann and Don have throughout the series. This lack of communication is partially due to the nature of the sitcom, which Spiegel points out includes “a story that emphasizes everyday complications, and a narrative structure based on conflicts that resolve in thirty minutes.”⁶⁸ It also represents inherent separation between men and women, with Ann and Don unable to bridge the gap through communication. Ann’s emotionality is

1960’s brought this discontentment to the forefront, it was not created then. Ann and Don openly acknowledging, as well as the show examining, these topics is indicative of the time they live in.

⁶⁷ *That Girl*, “Battle of a Single Girl,” episode 505, directed by John Rich, written by Bruce Howard, aired October 23, 1970, on ABC.

⁶⁸ Spiegel, 136-7.

incompatible with Don's rationality; he won't understand her feelings and she can't always communicate them properly because of it.

In "A Limited Engagement,"⁶⁹ marriage becomes too real for Don when Ann has her bridal shower. Even though his friend Jerry tells him that he also experienced these reservations when he got engaged, Don decides to break off the engagement. Ann is heartbroken and immediately assumes it's her fault. She thinks that he doesn't want to marry her specifically, even though he says it's the idea of marriage overall that worries him. Ann tells her dad that she's too silly, immature, and ugly (among other things,) and that's why Don left her. While there is plenty of time spent on Ann's feelings, it also is an exploration of Don's feelings, a marked departure from most *That Girl* episodes. In the end, Don comes back to her and says that the person who broke the engagement wasn't really him, but some other person, speaking figuratively since he is the one who broke it off. The engagement is back on. This deus ex machina of sorts is the same technique used in Ann's episode, and Don is mostly absolved of any blame.

In this episode, marriage as the merging of two people also represents the merging of their spheres and gendered characteristics. Don is very emotional in this episode as shown through shots showing him looking pensively out the window, to the surprisingly candid conversation he has with Jerry. Don's emotions lead him to take action, and a drastic one at that. Ann never decides to end the engagement when she has her doubts, but Don does. This difference in actions taken highlights that even if Don is more "feminine" due to his emotional state, he still doesn't show female passivity and takes strong action.

⁶⁹ *That Girl*, "A Limited Engagement," episode 516, directed by Richard Kinon, written by Sam Turteltaub and Bernie Orenstein, aired January 14, 1971, on ABC.

These episodes provide a more serious look at the issues that come with marriage. While *That Girl* initially sets up marriage in an idealized way, it soon looks at it more critically by highlighting the real struggles that both Ann and Don go through during their engagement. This shows the real-life changing notions of marriage, reflected in the dropping marriage rate as well as the slowly climbing divorce rate that was going on at the time.⁷⁰ Marriage was no longer seen idealistically, let alone as indestructible. While *Lucy* shows their married couples bickering, not seeing eye-to-eye, and sometimes getting into serious fights, the institution itself is never questioned. *That Girl* shows both the initial idealized version of marriage, as well as the less idealized version that comes when Ann and Don realize what they have signed up for. Gendered norms are blurred, but they are ultimately upheld. Thus while *That Girl* allows Ann agency in critical thinking about her relationship, she is still portrayed as a typically irrational and passive woman. While these episodes indicate real-life change over time with regards to feelings about marriage and relationships, the underlying themes of passivity and emotionality question the real-life progress made in not making marriage an end all be all for a woman's life.

While Lucy was always wife on *I Love Lucy*, an important development for her character is becoming a mother. Episodes revolving around her pregnancy often explored Ricky's feelings, thus these episodes explored Lucy's changing relationship with Ricky as she prepares to be a mother. Lucy's pregnancy was the most overt depiction of motherhood to happen on the show, and was also quite controversial. CBS was hesitant to air anything regarding Ball's real life pregnancy since pregnancy and intercourse are inherently linked, and there were moral

⁷⁰ May, 102.

grounds to consider when deciding whether or not to address sex on TV.⁷¹ Since Lucy and Ricky were married and of child-rearing age, putting them up against societal standards of the time would lead one to conclude that a pregnancy would be expected. Knowing that this controversy existed informs readings of the seven pregnancy episodes, three of which I watched including “Lucy Is Enceinte,”⁷² with “enceinte” being the French word for “expecting,” as well as “Ricky Has Labor Pains”⁷³ and “Lucy Goes to the Hospital.”⁷⁴ These three episodes provide a nice synopsis of Lucy’s on-air pregnancy. In the first, she tells Ricky she’s pregnant, in the second Ricky is affected by the pregnancy, and in the third the baby arrives.

When “Lucy Is Enceinte” starts, it is pretty obvious that she is pregnant. Hiding under a large coat is a stomach that looks a lot bigger than in episodes past. Lucy doesn’t think she’s pregnant at first. At Ethel’s insistence, she goes to a doctor and learns that she is in fact pregnant. Thus, the audience finds out along with Lucy. Once she finds out, she spends the whole episode trying to tell Ricky her good news. She says, “all my life I’ve dreamed about how I’m going to tell my husband that I’m having a baby.” Lucy thus assumes her proper role as a woman who has spent her whole life aspiring towards motherhood. In the end, she has to reveal it publicly to Ricky at his club. This mirrors the real life Lucy and Desi announcing their pregnancy on the public stage.

This episode is one of the most sentimental in *Lucy’s* run, a departure from the generally wisecracking Lucy. Pregnancy transforms her into a more docile woman. This episode doesn’t

⁷¹ Bor, 465.

⁷² *I Love Lucy*, “Lucy is Enceinte,” episode 210, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired December 8, 1952, on CBS.

⁷³ *I Love Lucy*, “Ricky Has Labor Pains,” episode 214, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired January 5, 1953, on CBS.

⁷⁴ *I Love Lucy*, “Lucy Goes to the Hospital,” episode 216, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired January 14, 1953, on CBS.

involve a wacky scheme or over-the-top physical comedy (probably due to Ball's expectancy). It's as if the power of pregnancy and motherhood – the epitome of the female sphere—are the only thing that can reign Lucy in. Not Ricky, not Ethel or Fred, not all the times she's gotten herself into trouble and had to concoct hare-brained schemes, but the idea that she is going to be a mother, that she will have ascended to the highest form a woman can be.

“Ricky Has Labor Pains” is primarily about Ricky and how he is supposedly so jealous of all the new attention that Lucy gets that he develops pregnancy symptoms such as stomach pain and feeling sick. This prompts the doctor to suggest that if Ricky gets some attention, he'll feel better. This episode focuses on all the sacrifices that Ricky as a man has to make for his wife's pregnancy, specifically how his life gets interrupted and inconvenienced. Ricky is upset that Lucy forgets to make him lunch and dinner and seems completely incapable of fixing it himself. This episode blurs spheres in a new way. Lucy is unable to fulfill her gender roles due to her pregnancy, thus Ricky's experience in the home sphere is altered. As a result, Ricky not only gets upset, but also ends up foraging into female gender role territory with his emotional (and physical) response to Lucy's pregnancy. When Ricky gets some attention in the form of a “daddy shower” – or a gathering of all of his male friends much like women have a bridal shower – he is fine. Ricky has to travel even further into the world of the female in order to cure himself.

In “Lucy Goes to the Hospital,” Lucy actually has the baby. We don't see much of Lucy in this episode, probably because it was filmed right before she gave birth to Desi Jr.⁷⁵ While this

⁷⁵ The episode was filmed sometime in the week before airing on January 14, 1953, and she had Desi Jr. on January 19, 1953, or about a week and a half to two weeks after the episode would have been filmed. Thus she was probably not in much of the episode since she would have been extremely far along at this time.

makes sense logistically, it means that the episode becomes more about Ricky than Lucy. Ricky panics about the baby much more than Lucy, prompting Lucy to tell him to “calm down or you’re going to fall apart.” Lucy seems almost casual about this situation, suggesting that it is more natural for her than it is Ricky. This is child-rearing, the ultimate goal of domesticity, thus it is her domain as a woman. This episode also represents not only a blurring of roles, but a full reversal. Lucy is the rational one while Ricky is emotional and, as Lucy observes, about to “fall apart.” While of course an expectant father is going to be emotional in the days and hours leading to his wife’s delivery, Ricky’s reactions compared to Lucy’s imply that she is in control and he is not.

These latter two episodes where Ricky has to come to terms with Lucy’s pregnancy show him trying to navigate and respond to the home sphere. When he has to come face-to-face with the domestic as he does in these episodes, he panics and acts out. Domesticity is a kind of kryptonite to Ricky. As a man he can be rational about a lot, except for something he doesn’t often have to directly engage with. The audience laughs every time he expresses his worry or discontentment, implying that it is funny to see a man act like Ricky does. What does it mean that a bold assertion of womanhood brings these results? Perhaps that when men really come to terms with female roles and spheres, they go to pieces, explaining why they are so desperate to keep the spheres separate and regimented.

As mentioned before, it is important that Lucy’s main portrayal as mother comes as a pregnant woman. This was the first time that TV showed a pregnancy, and “Lucy Goes to the Hospital” was the first time that a woman would give birth on TV⁷⁶ (or the first time that birth

⁷⁶ Bor, 464.

was implied since we don't actually see it happen). As Stephanie Bor notes, pregnancy was a taboo topic at the time, with censors not even allowing characters to say the word "pregnant."⁷⁷ Some scholars have claimed that Ball's pregnancy reinforced American family values associated with the Cold War.⁷⁸ While this may be true, it is important to note that Lucy's motherhood is primarily portrayed as a pregnant woman versus a mom herself. As mentioned before, her son is not very present in the show. Her child does not impose too much on her life and she still gets to live like she used to before the baby. This would not have been the case in real life. Many families with children lived the suburbs, leaving behind old kinship networks and entering a new level of isolation. Mothers would generally be in charge of watching their own children.⁷⁹ Lucy gets the best of both worlds, especially at first when she still lives in New York City with her old social networks and lifestyle. She gets the accolades and status associated with being a mother at the time, but does not have to deal with the actual mothering (for the most part). Thus Lucy's portrayal depicts motherhood idealistically without any of its inconveniences as well as downplays the effects that pregnancy and new motherhood might have on women, such as post-partum depression and boredom. Instead, motherhood is shown as a truly natural sphere for women to inhabit.

Lucy and Ann's relationships to their men in their lives play huge roles in their shows. Their relationships are constantly the focus of plots, often putting Lucy and Ann in the position of having to scheme or figure something out in order to keep their partners and the relationships happy. There are instances where they try to defy these men, which shows

⁷⁷ Bor, 466.

⁷⁸ Jude Davies and Carol R. Smith, "Race, Gender and the American Mother: Political Speech and the Maternity Episodes of *I Love Lucy* and *Murphy Brown*," *American Studies* 39 no. 2 (1998) in Bor 466.

⁷⁹ May, 20.

notions of female independence. They either try to leave their spheres or blur the lines. However, at the end of the day, the men often have the final word, and the male and female spheres and roles are ultimately kept separate, with the idea that this is natural. These shows use sphere and role blurring as a way to advocate for separation. Thus, these shows moderately allow for women to have some freedom *within* their roles, but never *from* them. This shows that even though gender norms and politics were changing in the real-life United States, there were still holdovers of older norms from the 1950's to the 1960's. TV as a medium with a moderate voice represents this reluctance to change.

Chapter Four: Lucy and Ann as Domestic Women

Domesticity, by which I mean everything involved in the home sphere from housework to family roles, plays an essential part in both *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl*. This section on Lucy and Ann as “domestic women” will focus on Lucy as someone who operates solely in the domestic sphere – episodes surrounding her ability or lack thereof in domesticity. Ann’s portrayal as a domestic woman is different, in that sometimes it deals with Ann’s own domesticity – it deals sometimes with how she as a woman runs a home, and sometimes with how Ann fits into her old familial domestic situation, especially when Don is involved. Lucy and Ann have different domestic situations since Lucy has a husband, and later a child, while Ann does not have that same responsibility. This change in responsibility correlates with shifting notions of acceptable domesticity for women. Lynn Spiegel’s ideas on domesticity and theatricality in sitcoms play an integral role in this chapter. Spiegel argues that sitcoms had to have enough theatricality to keep an audience interested, but still had to have overall relatable themes of domesticity. Shows often depicted over-the-top displays of domesticity, which

highlighted an inherent artifice in family life.⁸⁰ I believe that this artifice is maintained in *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl*, but both Lucy and Ann want to be the ones deciding how they maintain it, even though they are often not allowed to.

Both *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* have episodes that involve hiring maids. The episode “Lucy Hires a Maid,”⁸¹ should actually be called “Ricky Hires a Maid,” since it is his idea. He hires her because he realizes that Lucy is exhausted from caring for the baby at night (which Ricky cites as the mother’s job since he as the father is the breadwinner and needs his rest) and taking care of the baby and house during the day. This is a rare example of a man taking part in the domestic sphere, but Ricky only does it so he does not have to fully immerse himself in domesticity by helping to take care of the baby. Lucy initially gratefully calls Ricky the “best husband ever,” but soon claims she isn’t “cut out to have a maid” because she has to give up her domestic role and have someone else do things for her, and not always in the way she does them. Class and affluence considerations color this episode. The maid questions Lucy on what modern appliances she has, with Lucy seeming embarrassed to admit that she doesn’t have all the ones the maid wants. This implies a sort of class anxiety that was common in the new consumer era of the 1950’s.⁸² Abundance meant thriving, and Lucy not having all the modern appliances means she does not have an abundant home.

In “Kimono My House,”⁸³ Don has a messy apartment that Ann can’t stand but he doesn’t mind. Ann hires a maid for him, because she “doesn’t like the idea of my boyfriend

⁸⁰ Spiegel, 165.

⁸¹ *I Love Lucy*, “Lucy Hires a Maid,” episode 223, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired April 27, 1953, on CBS.

⁸² May, 11 and Spiegel, 164.

⁸³ *That Girl*, “Kimono My House,” episode 119, directed by John Erman, written by Peggy Elliott and Ed Scharlach, aired January 18, 1967, on ABC.

living in squalor.” The maid Ann hires is a recent Japanese immigrant named Miko, who is also a live-in maid. Don soon grows to like Miko and her submissive ways, since “Japanese girls are brought up to cater to a man’s needs.” Ann becomes very upset, both with the new customs that Miko brings to Don, and because Ann, of course, thinks she’s going to steal Don away from her. In the end, Miko marries a different American man and lives with him, prompting Ann to decide to be Don’s de facto maid.

These two episodes have very different elements, but both deal with the same basic idea of domestic intervention and how the women feel threatened by it. Lucy loses her control over the private sphere to another woman, and thus her main function as a woman of the 1950’s, for whom domesticity was mostly everything. While Ann’s identity does not rely solely on domesticity, she also feels threatened by the idea of losing it. Part of this has to do with the maid herself, but Ann’s decision that being Don’s girlfriend means she is his maid removes the threat of losing her domesticity as well as the threat of infidelity. If Lucy and Ann can’t perform domesticity, they lose a sense of identity and purpose. Lucy and Ann are not asking to be liberated from the idea that women are inherently domestic, but wish to perform domesticity on their own terms.

Lucy and Ann also fail domestically throughout the series. In the *Lucy* episode, “Pioneer Women”⁸⁴ Lucy laments about how many dishes she has washed since she’s been married – 219,000 as she calculates – and she decides that she wants Ricky to buy her a dishwasher. When she tells Ricky, he says no and also calls modern housewives “spoiled” versus old-fashioned women who had less technology in the home. This is a common theme of early *Lucy*

⁸⁴ *I Love Lucy*, “Pioneer Women,” episode 125, directed by Marc Daniels, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired March 31, 1952, on CBS.

episodes: Lucy wanting some sort of home appliance or furnishing and Ricky saying no, often citing financial reasons.⁸⁵ This introduces a tension between abundance and financial restrictions. It also seems to point out that class anxieties applied more to women than men, since women were the ones who ran the home and thus played a key role in the consumer economy. Thus, while the woman represented the home, the home also represented the woman. Fred and Ethel join in the episode, and eventually the men and women face off by seeing who can go a week without using any technology made after 1900. The rest of the episode shows Lucy and Ethel trying to do things like making bread and butter from scratch, but fail.

The *That Girl* episode “Thanksgiving Comes But Once a Year, Thankfully,”⁸⁶ puts Ann as host of Thanksgiving dinner, with her parents, Don, and his parents as guests. Ann wants to host Thanksgiving in the order to “show some independence” as well as start her “own traditions.” To Ann, domesticity in this case is a crucial part of asserting her status as an independent woman. Everyone is picky, but Ann strives to please them all in order to prove that she not only can cook a big meal, but can also unite the two families. She wants to create a new kind of domesticity – one that she runs, in order to further solidify her relationship with Don. Ann runs around in order to keep all the food cooking properly, but things don’t go as planned, and she can’t remedy them. In the end, everyone sits down to her haphazard meal and eats with little complaint, meaning that she made her version of domesticity more or less work, but not in the way she intended.

⁸⁵ In “Lucy Wants New Furniture,” Lucy complains that their old furniture is not modern enough and in “The Freezer,” Lucy wants freezer in order to be able to keep more meat around the house.

⁸⁶ *That Girl*, “Thanksgiving Comes But Once a Year, Thankfully,” episode 211, directed by James Sheldon, written by Peggy Elliott, aired November 22, 1967, on CBS.

Both of these episodes involve Lucy and Ann failing to some degree at being the perfect housewife. The joke in these and episodes like them is that Ann and Lucy mess up domestic things like cooking, even though most of the time they do just fine. These episodes highlight more theatrical displays of domesticity. These episodes then combine to form “the ideal sitcom,” which “was expected to highlight both the experience of theatricality and the naturalism of domestic life.”⁸⁷ When they try to prove themselves through domesticity, though, is when they generally fail. This insinuates that domesticity should not only come naturally to women, but in this naturalness is an inherent silence. Women should be domestic figures, but not use that domesticity as a tool to empower or prove themselves. Domesticity is a woman’s job, not her war cry. Lucy and Ann, however, strive to assert themselves through domesticity. Their inability to do that when it counts is an example of their surroundings keeping them from achieving even the marginalized sense of empowerment they seek. While Lucy’s assertion of womanhood through pregnancy brings her stability and rationality, i.e. she is portrayed positively, she is not pregnant to prove a point. Thus quiet, natural, and ultimately passive assertions of womanhood are acceptable, but louder and more intentional ones are not.

In these four episodes, domestic agency is taken away from Lucy and Ann. They feel pressure to perform domesticity, but also use it as a tool for independence. Lucy and Ann’s empowerment through domesticity goes against notions of unfulfillment from domesticity prevalent in works like Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*. In this realm, TV glosses over a real-life issue women faced.

⁸⁷ Spiegel, 157.

An important development to *I Love Lucy* comes in its sixth season: Lucy, Ricky, and Little Ricky move out to Westport, Connecticut, a suburb near the New York state line. Fred and Ethel also manage to move out with them. Considering that moving to the suburbs generally meant leaving behind old social networks, Fred and Ethel would not have remained near Lucy and Ricky in real life, but they're kept together for the sake of the show. Lucy's move to the suburbs acts as the next step in the journey of domesticity. Lucy still gets into domestic hijinks, but they are different. This house is large and has plenty of furniture and new appliances. If they had lived in this house in the first place, many episodes revolving around domestic anxieties specific to city life might not have existed.⁸⁸ Now that they are in the suburbs, new story lines that focus on different kinds of consumer products are the norm.⁸⁹ Lucy's move from small urban apartment to large suburban house with all the amenities in order to better raise a family embodies a relatable life path in the 1950's, although Lucy still gets into her theatrical hijinks in Connecticut.

This also shifts the focus of the show to more suburban examples of homemaking. In "Lucy Raises Tulips,"⁹⁰ a tulip garden competition happens in Lucy's town. She competes against a neighbor and really wants to win. There is a wild scene in which Lucy accidentally gets stuck on a runaway lawn mower and travels all over town on it, destroying her competitor's tulips in the process. Journalist Harry Henderson, who examined postwar suburban America extensively, noted that in suburbia, "Constant attention to external appearance 'counts for a

⁸⁸ These episodes deal with concerns over furniture, living space, and appliances such as "Lucy Wants New Furniture," "The Ricardos Change Apartments," "The Freezer," "Lucy Hires a Maid."

⁸⁹ Ex. "Lucy Raises Chickens," "Building a Bar-B-Q."

⁹⁰ *I Love Lucy*, "Lucy Raises Tulips," episode 626, directed by William Asher, written by Madelyn Martin, Bob Carroll Jr., Bob Schiller, and Bob Weiskopf, aired April 29, 1957, on CBS.

lot' and wins high praise from neighbors."⁹¹ Lucy's fictional battle to win a competition all about outward appearances thus closely mirrors real-life attitudes in the suburbs. This episode thus contains relatable elements as well as theatricality. On *Lucy* and in real-life, women assert their domesticity as a status symbol, and this assertion that uses domesticity for social status as opposed to independence is suitable.

Lucy's journey through domesticity is not static. There are geographic relocations that occur before the move to Connecticut. Starting in season four, she, Ricky, Fred, and Ethel move out to Los Angeles in order for Ricky to work on a film. In Los Angeles she meets plenty of movie stars. Episodes when she's not at home generally don't revolve around domesticity, they deal more with her having funny albeit embarrassing encounters with movie stars. Looking at *Lucy* as a show, this makes sense. In order to make the show interesting and keep people watching, bring in famous movie stars such as William Holden, John Wayne, and Harpo Marx.⁹² The introduction of guest stars is a way for a show to increase its theatricality.⁹³ At the same time, though, Lucy often acts star-struck when she meets these men, putting her on the same level with the audience, who would probably react as she does if they were to meet these stars. These plot lines, then, ultimately uphold Lucy's relatability.

Ann not only tries to create her own domesticity, but also has to stay a part of her old domestic situation: her family. Spiegel notes that as television grew older, sitcoms became less about the theatrics and artifice of domesticity and instead posited domesticity as the only

⁹¹ Harry Henderson, "The Mass Produced Suburbs- II. Rugged American Collectivism, *Harper's Magazine*, December, 1953, qtd. in Spiegel, 164.

⁹² "LA At Last," "Lucy and John Wayne," and "Harpo Marx," respectively.

⁹³ Spiegel, 172.

natural option.⁹⁴ While I believe that the theory of theatrics and artifice applies to some of *That Girl*, there are times when it does not, and Ann navigating the relationship between her new and old domesticity is one of those times. She has a hard time navigating this transition, especially due to Lew's dislike of Don. In the episode "The Rivals,"⁹⁵ the titular rivalry is between Lew and Don, because Lew feels Ann's affection for him threatened by Don. Ann's mom defends Lew's actions by saying that he's just sad that Ann doesn't need him as much as she once did and that he wants to maintain his role as the most important man in her life. Ann somewhat defends Lew to Don even though she was upset about the same thing when talking to her mom. Her dad isn't just holding Ann back from her own version of domesticity, but she is holding herself back too. Considering Spiegel's assertion that shows posited that domesticity was the only natural option, Ann's situation is an exception that proves the rule. She has different kinds of domesticity to choose from, but she still has to have some semblance of domesticity.

Reflecting the 1960's, Ann and Don's parents – especially Ann's because we see more of them in the show⁹⁶ – have moments where they seem unable to comprehend the kind of relationship Ann and Don have, highlighting a generational gap. In "What Are Your Intentions?"⁹⁷ Ann's parents take the stage, when Lew decides he needs to ask Don if he plans on marrying Ann. He's upset that they have been spending so much time together if they don't plan on marrying, and thinks they should see other people if they aren't going to get married

⁹⁴ Spiegel, 178.

⁹⁵ *That Girl*, "The Rivals," episode 218, directed by Hal Cooper, written by Richard Baer, aired January 10, 1968, on CBS.

⁹⁶ This is due to their physical proximity, living only about 40 miles from Ann and Don, whereas Don's parents live in St. Louis.

⁹⁷ *That Girl*, "What Are Your Intentions?," episode 123, directed by John Erman, written by Milton Pascal, aired February 15, 1967, on ABC.

soon. Ann and Don object to this and explain why they don't want to marry right away. Ann cites her career, as well as "it's not a husband or my cooking that I'm worried about" and Don cites financial stability. Later in the episode, Lew refers to them as the "modern generation," highlighting the obvious generation gap between him and Ann/Don. Ann and Don's stance on marriage is emblematic of the late 1960's, with marriage ages increasing and marriage rates decreasing.

In "Odpdypahimcaifss,"⁹⁸ an acronym that stands for "Oh Don Poor Don Your Pants Are Hanging in My Closet and I Feel So Sad," it's Don's mom, Mildred, who causes the issues when she comes to visit Don in New York. Ann cleans her apartment because she wants to prove to Don's mom that she is not just an actress but can keep a home, catering to the older generation despite her proclamation in the previous episode discussed that she wasn't concerned about the home. Mildred finds a pair of Don's pants in Ann's closet, implying that Don at one point took his pants off in Ann's room, or that maybe they had sex. Mildred is horrified by this prospect, and this relates back to the 1969 Gallup poll discussed in chapter one where older people were more opposed to premarital sex than younger people. Mildred claims that Don "fell prey" to Ann, invoking the female temptress/helpless male trope,⁹⁹ and shames Ann for her fictional sexuality.

Overall, Ann and Don have a hard time navigating how they as members of a new generation fit into old relationship standards. It's as if Ann and Don want to break free from the restrictive relationship norms of their parents' time, but are hesitant because they are both

⁹⁸ *That Girl*, "Odpdypahimcaifss," episode 223, directed by Hal Cooper, written by Richard Baer, aired February 21, 1968, on ABC.

⁹⁹ This age-trope goes back to the story of Adam and Eve, with Eve being thought of as the temptress who got Adam to join her in immortal sin.

still beholden to their parents, Ann especially. Their parents' opinions on their relationship don't drastically affect it, but it's something Ann and Don have to continually deal with. While Don's mother poses the occasional issue, it is more often Ann's dad who causes problems, putting the onus on Ann to do something about it.

Because Ann is still beholden to her parents, especially her father, her role as an independent woman is called into question. Quite literally a patriarch, Lew tries to keep Ann in her old domestic setting. Ann wants to start her own chapter of domesticity: dating with Don with the potential for marriage and family, but without a mandate for them. There are episodes, "The Rivals" being one, where Ann complains about her father, but defends him to others. To be fair, Ann does go against her father's wishes sometimes. She dates Don, even though her dad has a tenuous relationship with him, and she pursues acting, something neither of her parents really approve of.¹⁰⁰ This shows that Ann herself doesn't quite know how to reconcile her old domestic situation with her new one. Her own performance of domesticity disturbs her parents' performance. Meyerowitz discusses TV in the context of blending the private and public spheres, but what about when two private spheres are blurred? Is Ann truly independent? She is in the trendy ways, i.e. she lives alone and works. But Ann does not have the luxury of performing domesticity as she wishes. Thus she is not independent in that respect, and she also isn't independent from larger notions of mandated domesticity.

Lucy and Ann both want to have control over how they perform and maintain their domesticity. There is a difference in how large of a role domesticity plays in each woman's life, and this difference reflects overall changing gender norms in the real-life United States.

¹⁰⁰ O'Dell, 166.

However, Ann does not completely swear off domesticity. And many women in the 1960's did not. NOW's Bill of Rights had amendments specifically about protections and benefits for mothers, such as tax-breaks and access to free childcare.¹⁰¹ This goes against the domestic silence imposed on Lucy and Ann in their respective shows, however. Television reflects the real-life conflicting relationships women and the populace at large had with domesticity. Lucy and Ann try to assert independence though their inherently artificial performances of domesticity. When it gets taken away from them, they flounder and work to get it back. When they try too hard to assert it, however, they fail, implying that domesticity is not to be performed, but simply done. Ultimately, the artifice of domesticity that Spiegel discusses works to show that domesticity is artificial whenever it is blatantly performed. These shows highlight that women have an ingrained need for domesticity, but shouldn't use it as a tool for independence.

Chapter Five: Lucy as "Traditional" and Ann as "Modern"

Observing basic characteristics, Lucy's character adheres to stereotypes of a "traditional woman" while Ann represents more the "modern woman," using a late 1960's perspective. Disregarding potentially subversive elements, Lucy as a housewife and mother who subscribes to beauty standards revolving around the New Look puts her in a more traditional setting than Ann, who is not married, works for a living, and strives more for sexuality than the modest notions of beauty Lucy wants. Since relationships and domestic status have previously been discussed, this chapter focuses on how Lucy and Ann navigate beauty and sexuality, as well as how they are shown when they work and what sort of women's social issues the shows tackle.

¹⁰¹ "NOW Bill of Rights," in Bloom and Breines, 418.

It is ultimately too simple to call Lucy strictly traditional and Ann strictly modern. These lines blur when considering the women's surroundings and how much Lucy and Ann try to change these surroundings. It is more effective to think of Lucy as a modern-traditionalist and Ann as a traditional-modernist. This moderation of roles reflects television's moderate and real life's mainstream stance on changing gender norms.

In "The Charm School,"¹⁰² Lucy hosts a dinner party during which the men and women spend most of the night talking separately. When she points this out to Ethel and her other friend, Ethel notes that she "always thought that's how it's supposed to be." The women confront the men and make them all sit together, but even when in the same physical space the conversation groups break off by sex, implying that gendered division is natural. The only time the men seem interested in mixing is when one of Lucy's young, beautiful, single friends arrives. This upsets Lucy, who believes it's her fault for letting herself go, and the next day she and Ethel decide to go to the charm school that the young woman had been talking about the night before. When there, they are graded on hair, skin, makeup, posture, and voice. Out of 100, Lucy scores a two and Ethel a thirty, prompting them to decide to start classes. They're bad students, and their failures are over-the-top and funny, highlighting just how unladylike Lucy and Ethel are. Later that night, Lucy and Ethel surprise their husbands. They look very glamorous and act not in their typical brash, sarcastic ways but more refined and suave. The men are upset by this and say that they don't like this new look because it is "phony" and they would rather have the women as they were.

¹⁰² *I Love Lucy*, "The Charm School," episode 315, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Davis, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired January 25, 1954, on CBS.

This episode is one of many that highlight Lucy and Ethel's anxieties about their appearances and age. While their husbands claim that they like their wives just the way they are, they were the ones who very clearly favored the young beautiful woman by talking to her and ignoring their wives for most of the night, even after the women made it clear that they wanted to spend time with their husbands. At the end of the episode, Lucy and Ethel are surprised to hear that Ricky and Fred liked them as they were, and make them promise to spend time with them at parties. This episode places the onus on Lucy and Ethel to do something, but paints them as overreacting when they do. Lucy and Ethel can't win.

This episode relates a surprising amount to a *Los Angeles Times* article titled "Lucille Ball tells Diet, Perfume, Voice, Hair Dyeing, and Complexion Secrets."¹⁰³ The episode and the article both examine Lucy Ricardo/Ball's hair, skin, and voice. While Lucy Ricardo is portrayed as being inept, Lucille Ball is posited as someone skilled enough in those domains to warrant an article sharing her "secrets." Pairing Ricky's remarks that Lucy is good enough as she is with this article, then, we see that Lucy does adhere to beauty standards of the time. She and Ethel are victims of the "low evaluation of self" that Meyerowitz describes as one of the conceptions of traditional femininity, and this causes them to act irrationally in the eyes of Ricky and most likely the public at large. How irrational were they really, though, seeing as their husbands were much more engaged with the younger woman than with them? Lucy and Ethel's fears about beauty are portrayed as irrational, and they are ultimately safe because they do truly abide by them.

¹⁰³ Lydia Lane, "Lucille Ball Tells Diet, Perfume, Voice, Hair Dyeing, and Complexion Secrets," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1952.

Two episodes of *That Girl* deal with appearances and sexuality. In “Call of the Wild”¹⁰⁴ Ann goes to a casting call where the director dismisses every other woman because they are “beautiful, glamorous, [and] seductive.” To him, Ann has “none of that sexy stuff” and is instead “wholesome and well-scrubbed.” He says that this is important because it won’t make housewives jealous, which upsets Ann because she wants to have tangible sexuality. Ann interrogates Don about whether or not he thinks she has sex appeal, which clearly makes him uncomfortable. Her father walks in on her doing a little striptease in the mirror in her apartment and panics, saying that living in New York City did this to her. Later, the casting director makes moves on Ann and tells her she does have sex appeal. Her father also tells her, in front of Don, that he thinks she has sex appeal. Even though these admissions are made under predatory or odd circumstances, Ann is nonetheless pleased to hear them. This highlights just how much Ann relies on men to affirm or deny her sexuality.

A similar *That Girl* episode is “I Ain’t Got Nobody.”¹⁰⁵ Ann mysteriously appears in the fictional magazine *Playpen*, a clear homage to *Playboy*. Don is shocked when he sees the photo because Ann “would never pose nude for a magazine.” He tries to correct himself by saying it’s part of her career, but is still clearly upset by it. Don confronts Ann, and it turns out that she recently posed for a different magazine, but the photographer put her head on a different woman’s body. Ann is very uncomfortable, as is Don, although he tries to be the logical one. He tells Ann that no one will recognize her. People do, though, including her father, who sees the photo while at the barbershop. At the same time, Ann has recently gotten a job on a

¹⁰⁴ *That Girl*, “Call of the Wild,” episode 220, directed by Hal Cooper, written by Milton Pascal, aired January 24, 1968, on ABC.

¹⁰⁵ *That Girl*, “I Ain’t Got Nobody,” episode 503, directed by Richard Kinon, written by Ed Scharlach and Warren S. Murray, aired October 9, 1970, on ABC.

children's TV show. When the head of the show sees the picture, he tries to reprimand her, but ultimately ends up making a move on her, causing Ann to quit. In the end, everyone manages to make peace with the situation, prompting Ann to note that "I wouldn't pose nude because I'm me. Other people have to do what's right for them." This line in and of itself represents change over time with regards to gender norms and sexuality, since it is impossible to imagine Lucy Ricardo saying something similar.

Despite the seemingly accepting end of "I Ain't Got Nobody," the overall tone of the episode is generally judgmental towards women who pose nude, especially by men. Ann only hears men's opinions on her sexuality, causing her to have a tenuous relationship with it. She wants to own her sexuality, as when she does the striptease in "Call of the Wild," but doesn't want it forced on her like it is in "I Ain't Got Nobody." Also, the men seem to only care about women's sexuality when it's someone they know. In the barbershop, Lew makes lewd comments along with another man before he realizes who the girl in the photo is: his daughter. Finally, both episodes deal with men hitting on Ann that affirms her sexuality but makes it seem dangerous. They harass her and come close to assaulting her in the process. Overall, while Ann seems to want some degree of sexuality, her surroundings work against her.

Female sexuality was much more overt in the 1960's than it was in decades past. The *New York Times* article "The Kind of Day that Girl Watches Wait For"¹⁰⁶ details changing women's fashion, specifically the introduction of shorts into the workplace and polite society, including "evening parties." The article posits shorts as powerful for women, who "weren't keeping [them] a secret." This article has a strong male gaze, however. The women

¹⁰⁶ Angela Taylor, "The Kind of Day that Girl Watchers Wait For," *The New York Times*, April 13, 1971.

interviewed talk about how their husbands like the shorts and how their male bosses “didn’t bat an eye when we wore them in the office.” Furthermore, the title describes shorts as a victory for “Girl Watchers,” or men who like to look at women on the street. This article closely mirrors Ann’s experience with sexuality. The women in the article like to display their sexuality, but it’s considered primarily from a male perspective. *That Girl’s* attempts to keep Ann from fully and confidently displaying her sexuality parallel real-life attempts to keep women’s sexuality in line.

Lucy and Ann want agency in their appearances, but in different ways. Lucy does not want sexuality as much as she does beauty and youth while Ann wants to seem more mature and sensual. As discussed in chapter one, sexuality in the 1950’s was only seen as appropriate in a private marriage setting, thus Lucy’s desire to be beautiful is done for her husband. Regardless of differences in how Lucy and Ann view appearances, both of these women still want to be respected. Respect and agency with regard to appearances in sexuality was important to women later in the 1960’s, as evidenced by a protest against the Miss America pageant in August 1968. In the invitation to the protest sent out by organizers, there is a list of ten specific things to be protested. One is “according to Saint Male: women must be young, juicy, malleable – hence age discrimination and the cult of youth. And we women are brainwashed into believing it ourselves!”¹⁰⁷ This point of protest represents exactly what Lucy abides by in “The Charm School.” Another point is, “To win approval, we must be sexy and wholesome, delicate but able to cope.”¹⁰⁸ This represents what Ann experiences. The first casting director calls her wholesome, but she wants to be sexy. Furthermore, she is “able to

¹⁰⁷ “No More Miss America,” in Bloom and Breines, 423.

¹⁰⁸ “No More Miss America,” in Bloom and Breines, 423.

cope” when men in power harass her because of her looks. Thus, beauty and sexuality standards that both Lucy and Ann experience were points of contention with what Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines deem “young radical feminists.” The shows intimate that sexuality and appearances are personal for the women but negates that notion by having men be the measuring sticks against which women examine their own beauty and sexuality. Television engages with real-life issues of female agency in appearance, but takes the moderate stance on it, upholding beauty norms for Lucy and modesty for Ann.

Both Lucy and Ann work in their respective shows, thus entering the public sphere. In the iconic *I Love Lucy* episode “Job Switching,”¹⁰⁹ Lucy gets in trouble with Ricky for spending too much money at the beauty parlor, citing that he doesn’t give her enough money. Fred and Ethel get involved, and the men say that the women could never get jobs, and that they “lie around the house” all day. They imply that “anyone could cook and do housework,” which prompts the idea that the men and women should switch jobs, and thus, spheres. Once they switch, they realize it won’t be as easy as they thought it would be. Lucy and Ethel have to lie in order to get a job at a candy factory, and Ricky and Fred fare no better in the home. At the end, the men and women decide that they should stick to their old roles, thus the spheres that had been blurred separate back out.

This episode relies heavily on visual gags to get across how unfit the groups are in their new settings. Ricky (wearing one of Lucy’s frilly aprons) tries to wash a chicken like a dish and cooks rice that boils over everywhere. Fred (wearing one of Ethel’s hair scarves) irons a silk sock to a crisp. Meanwhile, Lucy and Ethel, in one of the most famous scenes in *Lucy* history,

¹⁰⁹ *I Love Lucy*, “Job Switching,” episode 201, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Pugh, Bob Carroll Jr., aired September 15, 1952, on CBS.

can't keep up with the fast-moving chocolate conveyor belt, and have to stuff chocolates into their mouths and shirts in order to not let any pass by. Physical comedy and visual gags show how far into the opposite sphere the men and women have traveled. Lucy and Ethel lose any sense of proper and dainty physicality that they would have learned in "The Charm School." This shows that in order to operate in the male sphere, Lucy and Ethel have to lose some of their femininity. This also relates back to Spiegel's ideas on women changing physical appearances or physicality in order to lose femininity to not tarnish respectability. At home, Ricky and Fred wear the women's clothes, but this doesn't help them, either. This shows that while the sexes have to lose some of their masculinity or femininity in order to enter the other sphere, that loss doesn't help them succeed. Nature wins in the end, and this naturalism advocates for keeping the spheres separate.

Cary O'Dell posits that one of the reasons to appreciate *That Girl* as a "Single Woman program" is because there aren't shows dedicated to men building their careers.¹¹⁰ This simplistic view ignores the idea that shows about men building careers didn't exist because it was a given that men would work. In addition, O'Dell neglects how Ann is portrayed as working and how working affects other aspects of her life. In the episode "Fly Me to the Moon"¹¹¹ Ann becomes "Ms. Air Force," an initiative started with the intent of "putting the first woman on the moon" in order to keep up with the USSR, which had just put a woman in space. The episode focuses primarily on how Ann's new job, wherein she has to fly around the country with a Major James, affects Don, who fears that James will seduce her away from him. This episode,

¹¹⁰ O'Dell, 162.

¹¹¹ *That Girl*, "Fly Me to the Moon," episode 323, directed by Richard Kinon, written by John McGreevey, aired March 5, 1969, on CBS.

then, is more about how Ann will negotiate her personal relationships when they are affected by her work, or how her private sphere is affected by her role in the public. While nothing happens between Ann and James, Don's skepticism implies that when women work closely with other men, they have to worry about how it will affect their partners.

As discussed before, some jobs that Ann has put her in the path of powerful men who actually try to seduce or sexually harm her.¹¹² Whenever Ann is harassed, though, the end result is either her being fired or her quitting. This implies that the public sphere is dangerous for women, but that status quo is ultimately maintained in *That Girl*, with the harassing men never facing any consequences for their actions, as was often the case in real-life. In the episode "Goodbye, Hello, Goodbye," Ann works as a waitress, but neglects other customers when her parents come into the restaurant, showing that she can't leave her old domestic sphere, as discussed in chapter four, for the public sphere. Ann clearly wants to work, as did plenty of real women like her. In July 1970, a Gallup poll asked women, "Do you wish you had a part-time or full-time job outside your home, or not?" Overall, 40 percent of women said no, one percent had no opinion, but the other 59 percent either worked or wanted to work.¹¹³ Percentages of working/wanting to work were even higher when separated out by college-educated women (63 percent) like Ann. Ann's position, then, would be relatable to many women. The hangups and challenges she faces may also be relatable as well. Ann as a working woman is a modern trait, but she accepts sex discrimination and adherence to more traditional roles of daughter and girlfriend.

¹¹² In the episode "Nobody Here But Us Chickens," Ann's boss hits on her and essentially tries to kidnap her while he drives her home.

¹¹³ Gallup, 2260.

Lucy and Ann at a base level have different relationships with working. This is mostly due to the time in which woman lives. In this way, then, Lucy is strictly “traditional” while Ann is “modern.” However, by observing Lucy’s continual desire to escape strict domesticity, she breaks from the moniker of pure traditionalist. While Ann works, her work is often put in the context of her family or boyfriend, placing Ann in a more traditional setting. Women working, then, is nuanced. *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl* hint at these nuances and highlight real challenges that working women would face, yet these shows don’t work to break down the challenges, instead allowing the women to break down.

In both shows, some episodes deal directly with the issue of women’s rights. *Lucy’s* episode “Equal Rights”¹¹⁴ begins with a small fight between Lucy and Ricky that blows up. Ricky insists, “we’re gonna run this house like we do in Cuba where the man is the master and the woman does what she is told.” Ricky claims he supports women’s rights as long as women stay in their place. Fred sides with Ricky and asks the women “what do you want? You’ve got the vote, you wear pants.” Fred’s opinion relates to the question Betty Friedan wrote that women asked themselves, “Is this all?”¹¹⁵ If Friedan were to ask this question to Fred, he would probably answer her the same way. To Fred, women have gotten enough of the male sphere that they should be content. This notion is exactly what women like Friedan would later fight against. Lucy answers Fred by saying she wants “to be treated exactly as if I were a man.” She wants more of the male sphere. The boys agree, but only equate equal rights with lack of chivalry. They no longer offer to put their wives’ coats on and won’t pay for them at dinner, so

¹¹⁴ *I Love Lucy*, “Equal Rights,” episode 304, directed by William Asher, written by Jess Oppenheimer, Madelyn Davis, and Bob Carroll Jr., aired October 26, 1953, on CBS.

¹¹⁵ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1963) in Bloom and Breines, 407.

the women to have to wash dishes to pay for their meals. Through a strange series of events, Ricky and Fred end up in the jail for the night because of Lucy and Ethel. It's the women who get them out. In the end the couples hug and laugh about "equal rights," and they agree to go back to how things were.

This episode puts sphere blurring in the hands of the men. Because of this, Lucy and Ethel get skewed "equal rights" that are shown as being *harmful* to women. Lucy and Ethel suffer – marginally at first, but more dramatically at the end – because of the rights they asked for. These rights cause the men to suffer too, albeit in a more indirect way. In addition to this, as Patricia Mellencamp points out, comedy replaces anger with pleasure, and in turn defuses real situations that can be used to discuss the need for social change.¹¹⁶ The characters laughing at the end about equal rights, and the audience laughing along with them, makes the whole notion a joke. Lucy and Ethel attempting to blur the spheres is noteworthy, but they ultimately fail due to the control their husbands have over their wishes.

In *That Girl's* series finale "The Elevated Woman"¹¹⁷ Ann is upset with Don, who wrote an article about "women's lib,"¹¹⁸ because she thinks it's about her. Don insists that it couldn't be about her because she doesn't believe in women's liberation. To his surprise, she insists that she does. The main plot is that Ann is part of a women's lib group and wants Don to come to their meeting that night since all the boyfriends and husbands of the members were invited. Don reluctantly agrees to go, but fights with Ann for the entire episode about women's lib and

¹¹⁶ Patricia Mellencamp, "Situation Comedy, Feminism, and Freud," in Charlotte Brundson, Julie D'Acci, and Lynn Spiegel, eds., *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1997), 73.

¹¹⁷ *That Girl*, "The Elevated Woman," episode 524, directed by Roger Duchowny, written by Saul Turteltaub and Bernie Orenstein, aired March 19, 1971, on ABC.

¹¹⁸ This is the term Ann uses throughout the episode, although she never elaborates what exactly she means by it. In addition, the content of the article is never discussed; we just know that Don wrote an article about a fictitious woman who is an advocate for "women's liberation and freedom for women and independence."

whether or not it's important. The episode flashes back to other moments from previous episodes as evidence for either Ann's or Don's argument. The final scene of the episode, and series, shows Ann reading a book about hockey. She's excited to read that there is a woman hockey player and tells Don. He responds that he doesn't "mind" women doing sports, and that "there's just one place they should keep girls out of... women's liberation meetings." The last line of the entire series supposed to portray the independent woman of the 1960's? A crack about feminism. Don getting the last word asserts power over Ann. This shows that she, and women in general, will face opposition as they fight for equality

This episode also uses comedy to defuse the tension between Ann and Don, and also, like the *Lucy* episode, to make the whole notion of women's equality a joke. The flashbacks that occur are funny moments, like Ann getting her toe caught in a bowling ball, or Ann splattering Don with mud as she tries to get his car unstuck. Even when it flashes back to unfunny moments, like Ann getting robbed in Central Park or harassed by a salesman, the audience still laughs. This comedic relief distracts the audience from the task at hand: Ann and Don's debate about what kind of equality women have with men. This is what Mellencamp refers to as "comedic containment." She says that humor might have helped repressed women of the 1950's as a "tactic of survival," but argues that because Lucy and Ann are always in an inherently comedic environment, anger at their situations, both their own and the viewers', is always diluted by comedy.¹¹⁹

These two episodes share important similarities: the men don't believe that women don't have equal rights, the episodes put the women in second place, and comedy is used in

¹¹⁹ Mellencamp, 73.

order to weaken potential anger at injustice. While the episodes examine notions of equality and sphere-blurring, the end message is that the status quo shouldn't necessarily be changed, or that the status quo is powerful enough to quash change. This is sanitized empowerment at its finest. Lucy and Ann can be as "feminist" as they want to be, but they cannot change their surroundings. This is also a prime example of moderation in television. TV will engage with women's social issues, but will not necessarily actively work to break them down.

How, then, do we consider Lucy and Ann as "traditional" and "modern," respectively? Cary O'Dell believes that "if modern-day feminism is defined as 'outrageous acts and everyday rebellions,' then certainly nothing fits more than Lucy."¹²⁰ Lucy is aware of the fact that women have stricter roles in society than men and actively tries to challenge some, by working, but abides by others, like beauty standards. Lucy doesn't rebel against everything, and even when she does, her surroundings generally hold her back, and she will only fight them for so long. Lucy, then, can be considered a modern-traditionalist. Ann is more outwardly ardent for women's liberation and independence, but also more or less accepts the status quo of gendered norms and male power. Ann can be called a traditional-modernist. Ann fits Meyerowitz's point about movements being presented as "not too revolutionary." Lucy does too, and because there was no national women's movement when *Lucy* was on, instances of her fighting the norm are even quieter. Meyerowitz argues that regardless of content, television weakened gender division, and certainly men who watched *Lucy* and *That Girl* saw instances of women fighting norms that could have led to new discussions and changed minds. But considering that the separation of spheres is often upheld, and that the use of comedy

¹²⁰ O'Dell, 87.

weakens potential anger, these shows generally worked to uphold the gender status quo. Mainstream media working to maintain the status quo is a common theme in newspaper discourse, as will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Newspaper Discourse on Women in Television

By examining newspaper discourse, one can observe how another facet of mainstream media wrote about women in television. Newspaper journalists responded to what they saw on TV, and in the process added to the narrative about women that television was pushing. By observing these articles, then, we can see how real people reacted to women on television, while also writing another media narrative that all other viewers would consume. These articles often affirmed tropes and ideas about women shown on TV. Print media such as *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* were¹²¹ aware of the different place women held in television. Some articles focused on women in television in general addressed disparities between men and women on TV and looked at television from a woman's perspective. Overall, though, they tended to focus on traditional notions of domesticity, beauty, and competition amongst women in television. Like television, newspapers took a moderate stance on changing gender roles in real-life and on TV.

Lucille Ball and Marlo Thomas were profiled in newspaper articles in somewhat different ways. "Woman of the Year: Lucy Reigns as TV's First Lady,"¹²² focuses on the domestic side of Lucille Ball's life. The article's headline is misleading, though. It paints the article as a profile of

¹²¹ I'm looking at articles in *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* due to their location and popularity. These two newspapers are centered in national entertainment hubs and were and are two of the biggest newspapers in the country. Thus, I think that these newspapers will have content written by journalists that are well-informed about the state of the industry due to physical proximity, and a look into the widely held opinions of the nation as a whole due to their national status and dissemination.

¹²² Cecil Smith, "Woman of the Year: Lucy Reigns as TV First Lady," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 1959.

television's "first lady," not domesticity's. This places domesticity as an integral part of a woman's identity, regardless of other ventures she may engage in. Much like Lucy Ricardo, Lucille Ball, no matter how hard she tries, can never truly exist outside of the domestic sphere. The article begins with an anecdote about Ball and her children, establishing Ball from the start as a mother. While it focuses on her television accomplishments and calls her "an elusive, multifaceted personality – almost impossible to fit on the flatness of a newspaper page," it goes on to say that

"As a woman – watching her here in this handsome, sprawling Beverly Hills home with little Desi and Lucie, there's no question as to where her heart is. And when she talks of the mushrooming growth of Desilu, the wife is more often there than the vice president. The knot of concern tightens on her forehead and her eyes cloud as she speaks of the tremendous strain on her husband in operating the colossus he created."

This paragraph depicts Ball as the quintessential real-life housewife of the 1950's. She has an abundant home with children and primarily concerns herself with her husband's stress as a member of the public working sphere. The article itself says it: her heart is unquestionably in the home. At the same time, Ball was a member of the public sphere herself, working hard like her husband. This article glosses over most of that, though, and instead reaffirms the idea that no matter the woman, she is always first and foremost a natural resident of domesticity. This article contributes to the narrative that *I Love Lucy* pushed of woman as domestic goddess first, with any other ventures coming second.

As discussed earlier, another important profile of Ball's is titled "Lucille Ball Tells Diet, Perfume, Voice, Hair Dyeing, and Complexion Secrets."¹²³ The title essentially describes the

¹²³ Lydia Lane, "Lucille Ball Tells Diet, Perfume, Voice, Hair Dyeing, and Complexion Secrets," *The Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1952.

article in full, except for a small tidbit at the end that informs the reader that “If you would like to know Lucille Ball’s reducing diet, her formula for dyeing her hair, her favorite shampoo, eye cream, cleansing cream or perfume send a self-addressed STAMPED envelope to Lydia Lane.” Not only does the article applaud Ball for all her beauty achievements, but it also gives the average *Lucy* fan a chance to be beautiful like Ball.

A tension arises when considering this article extolling Ball’s beauty with episodes of *Love Lucy* in which Lucy worries about her appearances. These anxieties often derive from her husband and his attention to younger women perceived by Lucy and the show overall as “more beautiful.” Lucille Ball is an authority on beauty while Lucy Ricardo is not. When this article was discussed in chapter five, it proved that Lucy had Meyerowitz’s female trait of “low evaluation of self.” Yet both Ball and Lucy are beholden to changing themselves in order to seem more beautiful. Positing Ball as a beautiful woman and spreading her beauty tips to average women upholds beauty standards for all women involved.

Some profiles of Marlo Thomas also adhere to the practices of talking about women’s beauty and domesticity over other topics. A short one-page spread titled “Marlo: That Girl is Busy”¹²⁴ is mostly pictures, but contains a short blurb that calls Thomas “probably the youngest, loveliest film company president around... Along with her executive involvements, she works closely with fashion designer Werle to keep up the fresh, young career girl looks that has caught the viewers’ fancy.” Glossing over her executive work, the blurb instead focuses on her involvement with fashion. Another highlights the *That Girl* finale party,¹²⁵ which, apparently planned by Thomas, the article deems “perfect.” It also calls her house “beautiful” and her

¹²⁴ “Marlo: That Girl is Busy,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 23, 1967.

¹²⁵ Joyce Haber, “That Girl Gives That Party,” *The Los Angeles Times*, December 2, 1970.

wardrobe “great.” All this comes at the beginning of the article, establishing Thomas as some sort of domestic goddess, as well as an actress.

Some profiles delve more into Thomas’s political ideas. One focuses on an album of “stories, poems, and songs” that Thomas produced called “Free to Be... You and Me.”¹²⁶ Thomas claims that she made the album because all the stories she read her young niece “featured women in aprons and men in offices.” She highlights, however, that this album “has nothing to do with women’s lib. It’s freedom for all – for boys and girls.” Another article proclaims, “That Girl is Speaking Her Mind.”¹²⁷ It starts off with a lengthy quote from Thomas describing the plight of women and how she feels about it:

“If a man runs a big business well, he’s known as a good executive. If a woman does, she’s known as a tough cooky. A girl at 24 wants to go to medical school but has to decide if she’s going to be a wife and mother or a doctor. A man doesn’t have to make a choice like that. I want to make women aware of their needs and their rights, show women they’re not alone, let them know that they’re not sick to think that they should have a better life.”

The balance between career and traditional family that Thomas mentions is frequently at play in episodes of *That Girl*. The rest of the article describes how important Thomas believes participating in politics and charity is, and how she’s been spent most of her time preoccupied with things of that nature since ending *That Girl* the year before (in 1971). It is important to note the timing of Thomas’s political engagement and the publishing of these articles: after *That Girl* ended. In neither of these articles does Thomas mention the potential impact *That Girl* might have had on conversations surrounding women’s liberation or national politics. It’s as if Thomas’s politicization and her TV show are mutually exclusive. Marlo

¹²⁶ Joyce Haber, “That Girl Solves That Gift Problem,” *The Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 1972.

¹²⁷ Aleene MacMinn, “From Womlib to Politics: That Girl is Speaking Her Mind,” *The Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1972.

Thomas may have been a political figure, but it's unclear if she or the media saw Ann Marie as one.

Both articles prioritize discussion of domestic and beauty traits each real-life woman had. This similarity reinforces ideas seen on both shows that women first and foremost must abide by certain societal conventions and not stray too far from traditional gender norms. This newspaper narrative works in tandem with television's. There is somewhat of a divide, however, between how actresses like Lucille Ball and Marlo Thomas were discussed and portrayed by newspapers versus how their characters were portrayed on their respective TV shows. In the articles, both women have more agency, be it in their beauty or politics, than their characters. Newspapers give the actresses a more candid platform than they have on their shows. In this way, newspaper profiles of the actresses themselves were a more effective tool for women to use to increase their agency.

In articles written about women in the industry, there was an implied acknowledgement that women both on and off-screen interacted with television differently than men. TV is portrayed as an overall adversarial place for women to succeed. These pieces explicitly address challenges, such as the slim numbers of women in acting and behind the scenes roles compared to men. They also indirectly imply challenges based on the topics they cover and language they use, such as an article that details how much more important it is for women to consider what they wear on TV than men,¹²⁸ and another that talks about how women's voices can hurt their chances at a successful TV journalist career.¹²⁹ Overall, articles written about women's relationships with television imply that TV is inherently a man's field and only has a small

¹²⁸ Judy Klemesrud, "What to Wear is Special Problem for Women," *The New York Times*, February 9, 1970.

¹²⁹ Lee Graham, "Women Don't Like to Look at Women," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1964.

opening for women. Through topics covered and language used in the articles, the implicit societal norm that women belong in the domestic sphere is upheld. Even in articles that bemoan the lack of women in television, concrete ideas on how to fix the problem are never really given. As mentioned previously, both newspapers and television acknowledged certain women's issues but did not do much to change the status quo of inaction.

Articles that directly address the issue of lack of women in television generally come later on in the 1960's, presumably due to the fact that by this point, the women's movement was growing quickly, and a big component of the movement was addressing employment disparities between men and women. One article published in 1968 blatantly outlines the issue in its headline "Ranks of Women Thin in Television."¹³⁰ The article continues this honest assessment with the opening sentence labeling TV "a wasteland where women are concerned." It cites Emmy award nominations, stating that "three were nominated out of nine actresses submitted to the voters, while for males in the same category there were five nominated out of a total of 47 submitted." But after its strong opening, the article goes lukewarm on its position, by highlighting how one actress, Barbara Bain of *Mission Impossible*,

"hasn't even had to worry about guest female competition. Except for one episode last season, there have been no other gals cast in Mission Impossible... This lack of women in TV, of course, doesn't disturb Miss Bain as much as it does the male TV audience. It's kind of a heaven to her, being one of the few actresses with a regular role on TV as fat as she has."

The article ends with an interesting note about how "girls, and sexy ones too, are plentiful when it's commercial time." On the surface this article looks like it's a rare example of a strong call for more women on television, but in the end it upholds traditional ideas about women:

¹³⁰ Hal Humphrey, "Ranks of Women Thin in Television," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1968.

they have to compete with one another and their only value comes from being good looking enough to be an effective tool with which to sell products. Both female competition and appearances were themes explored in *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl*, thus this article works in tandem with the narrative that both those shows pushed that these are natural parts of being a woman.

An example of an article geared towards women outside the TV the industry is “Women Don’t Like to Look at Women,”¹³¹ which examines why women are so unpopular on TV. This article proposes the notion that “to a large extent, this treatment of women in broadcasting reflects their status in other businesses and professions.” It goes on to establish its legitimacy early on by displaying how many different kinds of people involved with the television industry were interviewed, including “network officials, TV critics, advertising executives, psychiatrists, and viewers, both male and female.” Surprisingly, this article leaves out a source that could be rich in information: the women in TV themselves. This silence shows that discourse surrounding women in TV was driven by people already in power, such as the network officials, who were generally not women and thus did not truly understand the experiences of women in the industry. This was not dissimilar to TV itself.

The rest of the article is a fascinating read, highlighting three main reasons for why women are unpopular on television. The first, and most relevant reason to this thesis, is that it is the average female TV viewer, whose “hand that rocks the cradle” also “controls the TV dial.” These women supposedly get jealous when they see a woman on TV who is a “goddess with the right hairdo, makeup, and dress, plenty of poise, and a brain besides... And they’re not too keen

¹³¹ Graham, “Women Don’t Like.”

on having their husband watch her either.” This article claims that women are in constant competition with each other and thus cannot count on one another. When interviewing another network executive, he says that

“what accounts for the success of the few women who stay at the top – stars like Lucille Ball, Shirley Booth, Martha Raye [is that] they’re down-to-earth, good sports – human beings who don’t mind making a fool of themselves. Other women trust them and like them. They’re not another women’s rival. If you want to see what I mean, next time you go to a party, watch the expressions on the women’s faces when a really gorgeous sexpot sweeps into the room. You’ll see everything running through their minds from mayhem to ax murder. It’s no different on television.”

What’s most important to note here is that not only are women like Lucy safe for potentially jealous women, but they are also those jealous women themselves. There are several episodes of *Lucy* where exactly what the executive describes, “a gorgeous sexpot sweep[ing] into the room,” happens. Lucy’s response is exactly what the network executive would expect. Ann also has a similar experience, when a casting director calls her wholesomeness and lack of sexuality a good selling point since she won’t make housewives jealous.¹³² The notion of the jealous woman, then, becomes a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Lucy’s reactions and Ann’s marketability uphold notions of how women are expected to behave in real life. Thus, these facets of the shows uphold the status quo.

The second and final reasons deal with women in news broadcasting, although there are important lessons to be learned from them. The second reason states that women are not successful in news broadcasting because they “don’t have the authoritative personality that men do.” A connection can be drawn, then, between this idea and examples of female passivity and weakness on *I Love Lucy* and *That Girl*. The third and final reason is the most

¹³² *That Girl*, “Call of the Wild.”

puzzling: “there are not enough qualified women.” This is confusing because it seems like it would be more of an effect of women being shut out of TV than a cause. If there is misogyny in the TV industry, then there wouldn’t be enough qualified women because they wouldn’t get the opportunity in the first place. Both these ideas play back into the idea of women not being able to handle serious roles and jobs like men can. A quote from an unnamed network executive in a different article sums up this idea quite nicely:

“Television is a quick-decision business. There’s no room for emotional problems. And when you have women, you get emotional problems. They get their feelings hurt; they sulk and cry. Anyway, they don’t belong around the conference table; you can’t swear if they’re there. I say let ‘em type and take shorthand – period.”¹³³

With people like this in charge of networks, of course gendered norms are still going to be exemplified on TV. Ideas like these not only affect perceptions and employment of real-life women, but portrayals of on-screen women, too. This article also highlights one of the main issues with media discourse on women in television, the fact that it offers many problems but gives no solution. This presents the issue as one that cannot or even should not be solved, as if TV is doomed to forever be hostile towards the women who work in it and the women who watch it.

There’s also the common theme of placing women’s domesticity either above or on equal level with their work, like in the profiles of Ball and Thomas. Two profiles of other women in TV do exactly this. One is a short article titled “TV is Open to Women, Expert Says”¹³⁴ that profiles and interviews Esther Van Wagoner Tufty, president of the American Women in Radio and Television and also a political reporter on TV. However, despite her knowledgeable

¹³³ Joan Walker, “Women in Television,” *The Los Angeles Times*, November 20, 1960.

¹³⁴ Charlotte Curtis, “TV Is Open to Women, Expert Says,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1961.

perspective on women in TV, of the eight paragraphs in the article, only three are about the gains made by women in TV, with the other five being about Tufty's biography, her looks, or her domestic situation, with the article ending by discussing how important her copper pots are to her. What's important to note is that the headline is bold enough to assert that TV is "open" to women now, despite less than half the article being about that openness. This headline, like the one of Lucy's profile, is misleading. This article reveals that when women in TV were written about, there was still such a focus on their non-work lives, and in some cases this seemed almost more important. Even if women work, they are first and foremost homemakers and belong in domesticity more than they do in the labor force or entertainment.

Another profile of a woman in TV, titled "Actress-Eye View of Television,"¹³⁵ interviews and discusses Nina Foch, "a young actress who ran away from a long-term movie contract in Hollywood because television offered better opportunities." This article actually does a decent job of talking about Foch's views on the acting process and working in TV. What is notable is the repeated discussion about her typecasting in Hollywood as "a crisp, sophisticated blonde who always lost the hero to another woman." Foch "came East and entered television" after "feeling that the public might become suspicious of her man-getting ability." She herself says that the "business of playing the woman who never gets the man is no good. It hurts you with the public." Thus, the public places value in women on TV based on their ability to be loved by men onscreen. This relates to how Lucy and Ann value their male partners and often base their overall feelings on how loved they feel.

¹³⁵ Val Adams, "Actress-Eye View of Television," *The New York Times*, March 16, 1952.

Overall, the way women in TV and women who consume TV are discussed in these newspaper articles upholds traditional ideas about how women should exist, and thus they often work in tandem with television narratives that do the same. However, there are instances where actresses like Ball and Thomas are given more agency in the articles than their characters are on TV. Newspapers appear to play a conflicting role, but it is really the actresses themselves who use newspapers to gain agency versus newspapers actively working to dismantle gendered norms. On the whole, though, newspapers work with television to provide a moderate take on changing gender roles throughout the 1950's and 1960's. Newspapers and TV both wrote about and reported on what they saw, which was sometimes the prevalence of older gender norms in society, and actively upheld these norms by oftentimes not questioning them.

Conclusion

Lucy Ricardo and Ann Marie were aware of their marginalized role as women. Because of this, explorations of female identity were prevalent on both shows. Lucy and Ann are depicted as being wives, mothers and girlfriends. They both play large roles in the domestic sphere. Finally, anxieties about their beauty and sexuality are placed under a microscope. Observing all these typical dimensions of womanhood, Lucy and Ann often get the short end of the stick. They try to exercise agency in these domains, but never wish to stray from them. Even when they try to exercise agency, they are often rendered unsuccessful due to the men in their lives and/or their surroundings. Lucy and Ann are more alike than one would expect when thinking of the dominant stereotype of women in both eras. This similarity calls notions of progress in change in gender norms into question. Television depicts mainstream and

moderate ideas due to its necessity to reach to and appeal to the largest number of people. Television reveals that changing gender roles ebbed and flowed over the 1950's and 1960's, and it is inaccurate to think of the former era as old-fashioned and the latter as purely progressive.

As women, both Lucy and Ann tried to enter traditionally male spheres with varying degrees of success. In Lucy's case, she can never fully break into the public sphere of working outside of the home. While Ann does work outside the home, her role in the private sphere of the home always makes itself obviously missing, and as a result Ann is still beholden to this sphere. Depictions of these women on television ultimately reinforced not only the idea of different roles for different genders, but they made these separate roles seem natural.

The real women's movement of the 1960's and 1970's was not a wholly successful and inclusive venture. As discussed earlier, most women were still not professional working women, and thus could not relate to the mainstream movement that pushed primarily for working women's rights. NOW had issues of its own, being a large group with many smaller factions within it, leading to disagreements and hindering its national success.¹³⁶ Furthermore, the mainstream women's movement did not intimately include women of color, queer women, and poor women. In a way, then, the mainstream women's movement was in and of itself moderate. Television wasn't going to place Ann or Lucy in a feminist utopia because the real world was not a feminist utopia.

These shows actively engaged with women's issues. For this reason, they are not just shows with women in them, but shows *about* women. For this reason, we can read these

¹³⁶ Evans, 278.

shows as adding to the national dialogue about women's rights and equality. From a 2018 perspective, it is easy to watch these shows and point out countless examples of what we today would deem blatant sexism. When putting these shows in dialogue with events happening and beliefs of the times in which they aired, we come to a different conclusion. Television responded to changing times, as is evidenced by the creation of *That Girl* and the burgeoning genre of single women working shows, like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* airing later in the 1970's, in response to more single women working. Yet television also held its female characters back, reflecting the not-complete liberation of real life women but not actively attempting to change that. Television both responded to moderate changes in gender roles and upheld or created them.

In a way, women on TV in and of itself subverts traditional norms because these women were career women. Newspaper discourse about the actual women themselves often diminishes that by playing up domestic or beauty angles. These two facets of mainstream media, then, often acted in ways which kept women in their societal places. These real-life women, much like the characters they played, were also held back by their surroundings. While women were slowly making progress towards achieving social, political, and economic equality with men, there was plenty standing in their way, and television was no exception.

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