

**Life in a Silken Net:
Mourning the Beloved Monstrous in *Lydie Breeze***

Robert F. Gross

[. . .] While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him [. . .]

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?¹

I

At the center of John Guare's *Lydie Breeze* is an absence—Lydie herself. Long dead, she is put forward in the title as the subject of his play. By so doing, Guare establishes from the start through his dead eponym that this is a drama about the interplay of presence and absence. *Lydie Breeze*, who was a major character in *Women and Water* and *Gardenia*, continues to exert an influence on others, but this time from beyond the grave.² This predominance of an absent figure places *Lydie Breeze* in the company of what I will call "plays of mourning", plays in which the dramatic action is dominated by the centrality of a deceased character, and the responses of the other characters to this absence.³ In the Western tradition, a number of these plays derive from the story of the House of Atreus, such as *The Libation Bearers*, *Hamlet*, *Ghosts*, and *The Pelican*, and situate this action in relationship to the ongoing power of patriarchy, even from beyond the grave. But the play of mourning can also center around a lost mother, (*Desire Under the Elms*, *Lydie Breeze*) or offspring (*Little Eyolf*, *Suddenly Last Summer*). In Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* mourning is extended to a child who never was, while William Inge risks bathos

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by portraying mourning for a lost pet in *Come Back, Little Sheba*. In these plays of mourning, not only do funeral rites become important motifs—whether in the "maimèd rites" of *Hamlet*, or Helene Alving's construction of an orphanage to the false image of her dead husband—but the plays themselves become funeral rites as well, as the action configures itself around an imagined lost object.⁴

The importance of absence in drama is certainly not limited to plays about mourning. Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* postulated the birth of the play impulse in an infant's need to master the anxiety felt by the absence of its mother, and thus introduced a critical discourse of absence into modern dramatic theory. Michael Goldman, to take only one example, has elaborated on Freud's theory, and linked the wellsprings of theatre with "the games we play with fear and loss,"⁵ suggesting the art's kinship with shamanism and mourning rituals (38-39). Bruce Wilshire, drawing on the insights of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, has discussed absence in the theatre as no less essential, but as ontological, rather than psychoanalytic. "Theatre," Wilshire writes, "is a perceptual and physiognomic mode of giving presence to absence and concealment."⁶ A further, more radical development of this intellectual tradition leads to Derridean deconstruction, in which absence is posited within the very act of signification. All theatre, agree psychoanalysts, phenomenologists and deconstructionists, has something to do with absence.

The play of mourning, however, distinguishes itself by directly thematizing absence through its story of the relationship of the living to the dead. Taking the global and all-pervasive idea of "absence," it configures it, giving it a "local habitation and a name," thus particularizing something that philosophers and critics render abstractly and distantly. For, although the experience of bereavement is the most intense experience of absence that human beings undergo, it is also highly individualized and specific. It is both the wrenching termination of a unique relationship between two persons, and an existential boundary situation—as Lacan has described it, "a hole that has been created in existence."⁷ As Peter Marris explains:

Our purposes and expectations come to be organized about particular relationships which are then crucial to the way we constitute our lives. When we lose such a relationship, the whole structure of meaning centered upon it disintegrates.⁸

In bereavement, the perception of absence takes the form of a sense of loss, a temporal movement from presence to absence, and mourning is a process by which the bereaved seeks to come to terms with this loss.⁹ In the play of mourning, the past is often represented as a privileged moment of presence,

whether in Hamlet's description of his father, "A was a man, take him for all in all/ I shall not look upon his like again"¹⁰ or in the maid Beaty's description of her dead mistress:

Why did you [Lydie Hickman] have to be born when it was all over?
Why couldn't you have known your mother in all her glory?¹¹

The action of the plays of mourning, then, charts the attempt to reassert a sense of presence in a dramatic landscape characterized by loss.

II

The physical landscape of *Lydie Breeze* has been devastated by loss; it is a veritable Waste Land. A hurricane destroyed the village near the Hickman house, leaving it isolated and close to ruin itself. "This house is the only house out here now and soon this land will go, too," explains young Lydie Hickman (24). Referred to as "The House of Usher" (41), this house has been the site of several macabre incidents. In the front room, Lydie Breeze hanged herself. In the bedroom, she knowingly infected thirteen year-old Jeremiah Grady with syphilis, as a way of avenging herself on the boy's father, Dan Grady, who had infected her with the disease. From the house's porch, Jeremiah watched his father die in a fight with Joshua Hickman. Originally the site of an experiment in communal living, "Aipotu," the house has degenerated into a dilapidated hulk that echoes with memories of violence and loss.

Although the title of the play seems to give priority to Lydie Breeze as the mourned figure, there are a number of losses to be mourned here, and the text is not forthright about those causes that might take precedence. Indeed, I will argue that the death of Lydie Breeze represents only a small part of what is being mourned. Guare has heaped Pelion on Ossa to create a immense hole in existence, one which has prevented the characters from coming to terms with their bereavement for close to a decade. Besides the death of Lydie, there was the destruction of Aipotu. Less an ordered society than an experiment in the carnivalesque, "Aipotu," (which, as the text points out more than once, is "Utopia" spelled backwards) was a conscious attempt to demolish the past.¹² In *Gardenia*, the play that precedes *Lydie Breeze*, the commune's name is used as an image of its status as an inverted order:

Do you folks do everything backwards out there? We notice that you do the planting all wrong. Do you talk backwards and think backwards

and fornicate backwards and eat backwards and shit backwards so it goes into your brains? Aipotu? A good name for you all.¹³

This is not to say, however, that Aipotu is to be dismissed as nonsensical. In *Lydie Breeze*, it is remembered as a place of dreams and ideals (12, 31, 36), and is implicitly contrasted with that locus of power and scheming in *Gilded Age*, the yacht of William Randolph Hearst (10, 12, 14). On the yacht, Hearst and his cronies plot the Spanish-American War, rather than discuss "the universe being one and man willing utopias and finding new worlds in yourself" (31). The failure of Aipotu marks a loss of idealism, which allows Hearst's values of power and conspicuous consumption to set the stage for the coming century. "It's almost 1900. I'm American, by God. It's about to be my century" proclaims Hearst admirer Gussie Hickman (53). The American Century, Guare implies, is to be seen as one that grows out of a loss of utopian idealism.

In *Lydie Breeze*, Aipotu has long since collapsed, and an exaggerated and arrested state of mourning still grips the few surviving inhabitants of the house. The supposed "master of the house" is Joshua Hickman, now an apathetic and embittered alcoholic. A one-time citizen who is now disenfranchised (13), a father who has neglected his responsibilities toward his children, and a writer who has given up his vocation, Joshua is the Fisher King in Guare's *Waste Land*. Each day he repeats his first reaction to Lydie Breeze's death; he swims far out to sea (6, 13). Saying that he put himself into the grave with Lydie Breeze (36), he exhibits the symptoms of identification with the deceased, self-abasement, and depression that Freud identified with the melancholic reaction to bereavement.¹⁴

Joshua's melancholic withdrawal acquires further significance when we remember that the Joshua of *Gardenia* was characterized as a writer, the action of the play showing both his artistic development and the destruction of his work. As *Gardenia* begins, Joshua's book-length manuscript, *Prolegomena to Duty*, has been rejected by editor William Dean Howells for being insufficiently 'American.' "Let the brisk air of America blow through your vigorous imagination," Howells advises him.¹⁵ Later, while serving time in prison for his murder of Dan Grady, Joshua writes a second book, a memoir, entitled *Aipotu: A Nantucket Memory* (48). This book is praised by Howells, who writes Joshua that his "fragments . . . suggest a way to the American literature I am trying to create."¹⁶ Amos Mason, another ex-member of Aipotu, is convinced, however, that the publication of Aipotu would ruin his budding political career, and strikes a deal with Joshua: he will arrange for Joshua to be released from prison, so he and Lydie can regain custody of their daughters if Joshua will destroy the book. Although Lydie urges him to publish it, Joshua acquiesces to Amos' demand, and the curtain falls on the last act of *Gardenia* as Joshua destroys his book. Thus,

Aipotu is destroyed twice in *Gardenia*; both as commune and as its literary re-creation. Although the destruction of the commune is a recurring subject of conversation in *Lydie Breeze*, the destruction of *Aipotu* is never mentioned. Joshua's own repudiation of his literary vocation remains repressed. A Prospero, he has drowned his book, and renounced his patriarchal power along with it.¹⁷ The destruction of *Aipotu* and Joshua's inability to function as a patriarch are not merely coincidental; the loss of the written text itself signifies a crisis of authority, like Prospero's drowning of his book, or Moses' destruction of the tablets of the Law. As Jacques Lacan has repeatedly demonstrated, the figures of the Father, Law and Language are virtually synonymous.¹⁸

Neglected by her father, Lydie, the younger daughter of Lydie Breeze, is growing up, isolated and virtually illiterate, under the eccentric tutelage of Beaty, a family servant suffering from the advanced effects of syphilis, whose primary purpose in life is to somehow keep Lydie Breeze "alive" through private rituals modeled on the Roman Catholic Mass.

In the absence of Joshua's writerly patriarchy, Beaty has instituted a traumatized version of matriarchy. The play opens with her and Lydie Hickman invoking the spirit of Lydie Breeze. "We must keep your mother alive," Beaty insists (6). She educates the young woman by telling her the story of her mother's death, and by teaching her the skills Lydie Breeze had taught her. This oral transmission of skills is set in opposition to male writing. Significantly, although Beaty has taught Lydie to recite the alphabet, she has failed to teach her how to communicate through writing. Gussie, Lydie's older sister, tells us that the letters she receives from Lydie are unintelligible (16).

Beaty's version of matriarchy is doomed to failure from the start, because it is based on a simple denial of reality; Lydie Breeze is dead. To maintain her delusion, Beaty uses the dead woman's daughter as a medium to communicate with her. For Beaty, Lydie Hickman is what Vamik Volkan has called a "living linking object," a person that the bereaved uses as an object with which to control contact with the deceased.¹⁹ As opposed to Joshua, who has situated himself in the grave with the deceased, Beaty insists that Lydie is somehow still among the living.²⁰

By constituting her as a linking object, Beaty diminishes Lydie Hickman's own sense of selfhood. "I am safe. I am my mother," says Lydie, "Losing my sight is a present from her. Dead to the world so she can come in me" (8). Victimized by the pathological mourning in her household, Lydie is tenuously characterized by Guare. Repeatedly, she is the object of other characters' desires. Jeremiah, the son of Dan Grady, dementedly confuses Lydie with her dead mother (25). Gussie wants to take her to Washington, D.C., to be a stenographer like her, and thinks she sees in Lydie a resemblance to their dead mother (27).

For inventor Lucian Rock, Lydie is a Queen of the Underworld; "this Dido, this Persephone" he calls her (53). Part of the highly effective pathos of *Lydie Breeze* comes from the young and highly vulnerable figure of Lydie, as she struggles to mature against the figures of absence that threaten to overwhelm her. Connected to her mother not only through biological bonds, but by identical first names and repeated identification with each other in the eyes of Beaty, Gussie, and Jeremiah, Lydie Hickman verges on becoming a figure of absence herself.

Just as Beaty refuses to accept the loss of Lydie Breeze, Lydie Hickman begins the play with strong assertions of denial. She seeks to deny the existence of the outside world, insisting that she is blind for life, even though she can tell Gussie how many fingers she is holding up (10). She also denies time, insisting that she will never reach puberty—"I'm never going to have periods," she tells Beaty (8). For Lydie—and Guare—remaining the linking object to her mother and physical maturation are opposed terms. Lydie Hickman will mature, or she will die (9).

While Lydie's relationship to her mother is destructive, her relationship to Joshua is far from secure. Because of her mother's extramarital affairs, it is not clear who Lydie's father is. Gussie communicates this uncertainty to Lydie:

Some people even say Pa is not your real father. Amos Mason says
Dan Grady is your father. (17)

And Lydie expresses those doubts as well:

He [Joshua] may not be my father because in the old days it was a
commune and they all slept with my mother and then they murdered
themselves and killed themselves and picked up diseases. And
poisoned each other (41).

In Lydie's narrative, her doubt about who her father is gives way to a hysterical narrative in which all causal relationships collapse, and all distinction among persons is lost. All the members of the commune—Dan, Amos, Joshua, Beaty and Lydie—become subsumed into a single, undifferentiated "they" which wreaks violence upon itself. The origin of this undifferentiated violence rests in the fact that "they all slept with my mother." As in Strindberg's *The Father*, uncertainty about paternity undermines the structure of patriarchal power, and, as in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, the question of one woman's fidelity quickly mushrooms into a question about the order of the universe:

This she? No; this is Diomed's Cressida.
 If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
 If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies,
 If sanctimony be the god's delight,
 If there be rule in unity itself,
 This is not she [. . .].²¹

Like bereavement, this doubt of fidelity introduces an absence that threatens the entire structure of meaning the character has built up. It, too, is a "disorder that is produced by the inadequacy of signifying elements to deal with the hole that has been created in existence."²² In the figure of Lydie Breeze, the absence of death is linked to the absence of clear origins. What is ultimately being mourned in *Lydie Breeze*, whether in the figure of Lydie, in the destruction of Aipotu, in the loss of Joshua's book, or the loss of paternal origins, is the loss of a masculine power that would control absence and uncertainty.

On one level, then, *Lydie Breeze* is the story of a world threatened with the total collapse of systems of differentiation as result of the absence introduced by bereavement. This non-differentiation is registered primarily through strains on the systems of gender and sexual differentiation.²³ Guare charts a gradual restoration of difference by reinstating a patriarchal order, a restoration that is difficult because of the reluctance of the patriarch to take control, and the limits Guare wishes to set on patriarchy.

III

Guare's major strategy in re-establishing *Lydie Breeze's* patriarchal order is the creation of Jeremiah Grady as a scapegoat. Guare endows him with those very features of absence and resultant non-differentiation which must be expelled from the play's society. Jeremiah is now an actor, one who blurs the distinction between himself and the characters he plays. Not only does he blur the distinction in his own mind between the Monster he plays in *Frankenstein* and the monstrosity of his syphilitic self, but his behavior manifests an inability to separate himself from his role. For example, after the story of his father's death has been told by Joshua, Jeremiah suddenly launches into the Monster's big speech (34). The result is comic; the speech has none of the power that it has on stage. Indeed, most of the lengthy scene between Jeremiah and Joshua derives its comic effects from Joshua's ironic undercutting of Jeremiah's histrionics. Jeremiah's theatrical fantasies of revenge prove impotent when confronted with a real murderer, a man who describes the murder of his best friend as "the only

true moment in my life" (36). Guare repeatedly subjects Jeremiah's fundamental inauthenticity to Joshua's scathing critiques.

Joshua, despite his general abdication of patriarchal responsibility, has retained one important characteristic of the Father as agent of differentiation: he dislikes actors and acting. With his first entrance, he puts an end to Gussie's imitation of Amos Mason: "That's not a very good imitation. Is that supposed to be Amos Mason?" (11-12). This line reveals two things; first, that Joshua has immediately recognized the imitation as one of Amos Mason, and secondly, that he nevertheless denies that it has any accuracy. His comment immediately puts an end to Gussie's enactment. This resistance to acting is developed more fully in his confrontation with Jeremiah Grady. He accuses the actor of being:

trivial and vain—

This man has come back to avenge his father's death? is that it? Hell no! He's come back to avenge his front tooth! I love actors [. . .] (31).

mendacious—

What an actor. Acting. Lying. A star liar then and a star liar now (33).

and homosexual—

You wearing black because of Oscar Wilde? Is he one of your chums? (32)

Joshua, in short, recapitulates some of the major prejudices against actors.²⁴

Guare shares Joshua's anti-histrionic prejudice, presenting Jeremiah as inauthentic. The stage direction that first describes Jeremiah reveals this bias:

He affects the pose of a dandy, a ragged Byronic mien. But his face betrays real anguish. His speech is markedly English. His whole manner is histrionic, except—that anguish, that pain—that is authentic (21).

Jeremiah is presented here as a divided creature, part histrionic dandy, part authentic sufferer. This description divides him into parts, like the Monster in *Frankenstein*. The description assumes that acting is allied with affectation, and, by extension, with falsehood. His only claim on authenticity comes from the pain

he suffers. Here, Joshua's suspicion of actors is corroborated in Guare's side text.

Furthermore, Joshua's antitheatrical prejudices find a strong degree of justification in the overall structure of the play. Jeremiah is fatally ill and ontologically incomplete. His choice of an actor's life is portrayed as an act of cowardice, a flight from an anxious self. "I became terrified and to save myself and stop the bad dreams said I will become other people who are not afraid and I became an actor" he explains (35). This career, despite the success it has brought him, has not been enough to assuage his fear. His greatest success has come from playing a monster, a creature whose alienation mirrors his own. Playing the monster does not, however, bring him into authentic contact with people, but further exacerbates his own sense of monstrosity:

I don't want to be this monster. I am sick of playing this monster and if I am asked to play it for the rest of my life I have to have a whole human being to come back to when the curtain comes down. A human being! (35)

The Monster that Jeremiah plays is expressly defined by his lack of wholeness and autonomy. Not only is he constructed out of the bodies of others, but Guare, in an important revision of Mary Shelley's novel, makes the Monster lose his own sense of volition. His will, like his body, is not his own:

He [*Frankenstein*] makes this monster who's controlled by all the dreams of the parts he's made out of. Other people's dreams. Other people's nightmares (15).

The Monster's true monstrosity, then, is that he has no self; he is only the creation of other people's fantasies. Like an actor, the Monster is constituted and controlled by his "parts." He exists on the stage for others; he is "truly attractive. He pulls you toward him" (15). Although the spectators are attracted, they are really attracted to projections of their own dreams and memories. Gussie remembers how Jeremiah's performance as the Monster affected her; "Every evil ugly thing that ever happened woke up inside me" she tells Lydie (15-16). The strength of Jeremiah's performance does not bring the audience members into authentic contact with himself, but sends them into their own dreams. His portrayal is, therefore, a creative lack, an absence which is filled in by the audience. This absence makes him a linking object for the audience, just as Lydie is nullified into acting as a medium between Beaty and her sense of bereavement. The power of the actor, as Guare presents it, is due to his/her

inability to be a whole human being. It is this quest for wholeness that brings Jeremiah back to Nantucket.

Like Joshua, Guare links Jeremiah's profession as an actor to doubts about his sexual identity. Although Guare does not make the character gay, he does feminize him. Jeremiah's dandified dress, his affectation, the image of his lips wrapped around the phallic bottle of Moxie, his being the object of a fight to the death by two men, his sexual passivity with Lydie, his inability to avenge himself, all serve to undercut the image of his heterosexual masculinity. By making him the sole locus of sexual ambiguity in the play, Guare is able to purge *Lydie Breeze* of sexual ambiguity by removing Jeremiah.²⁵

As an agent of nondifferentiation, Jeremiah passes on his diseases to Beaty. Not only does she contract syphilis from him, but she also falls victim to his uncertain identity as an actor. Just as the Monster in *Frankenstein* is made up of other people's dreams, so too, Jeremiah's role in the sex act with Beaty is to be a surrogate for Amos Mason, the man she desires. A creature of parts, Jeremiah can never be recognized for himself, because that self does not exist. Although he begins to emerge in his scene with Beaty, proclaiming "Lightning strikes the monster. I come to life" (45), Beaty continues to react to him as if he were Amos, and he acquiesces in that fiction.

Beaty is Jeremiah's partner in the erosion of difference. Beaty's inability to differentiate between the past and the present, first seen in her ritual reenactment of Lydie Breeze's death, later reappears in her scene with Jeremiah, in which she conflates this night with the night, years ago, during which she and Jeremiah first made love on the beach (44-45). Beaty's world is ultimately one in which desire seeks to obliterate differences, whether in time, or between persons. Beaty insists on mistaking Jeremiah for Amos on the beach twice, despite the evidence of her senses. In the first encounter, she 'mistakes' a thirteen year-old boy for a mature man; in the second, she mistakes a tall man in his late twenties who plays the Monster in *Frankenstein* for one much older and fatter. As a result, her written account of how she contracted syphilis is a false account, since it names Amos Mason as her lover. Her account, which leads to comic confusion, must be contrasted with Joshua's *Aipotu*, the all-too-dangerously accurate account of the commune.²⁶ Beaty, rather than establishing order and difference, repeatedly effaces it, as does Jeremiah.

Jeremiah becomes the sacrificial victim of *Lydie Breeze*. Although he did not consciously infect Beaty, he comes to feel the need to expiate for the suffering he has unwittingly caused her. The victim of Lydie Breeze's vengeance assumes her role as penitent. By killing himself along with Beaty, Jeremiah rids the play of both syphilis and the anarchic effects of acting. The two characters who have most seriously effaced difference are thus removed from the play.

IV

Jeremiah is only the sacrificial scapegoat for the lack of differentiation in *Lydie Breeze*. He is not its cause. The relationship between the disorder in the commune and Jeremiah's role as Monster is best illuminated by René Girard's discussion of the monstrous in *Violence and the Sacred*.²⁷ For Girard, the monstrous arises in myth and ritual as the result of a failure of differentiation. One of its most common forms is that of rival brothers, locked in competition for a common object of desire: Cain and Abel, Eteocles and Polyneices, and Romulus and Remus are but a few classical examples of this motif. These figures come to increasingly imitate each other in a continual escalation of violence that threatens to engulf the entire community, eventually requiring the enactment of a human sacrifice to re-establish difference and restore peace. For Girard, the monstrous is a sign of non-differentiation.

Viewed thusly, it is not surprising that Jeremiah comes to be the Monster; Aipotu was already characterized by a monstrous lack of differentiation. Its very founding, as dramatized in *Women and Water*, was preceded by Lydie Breeze's narration of the Bible backwards, with God first uncreating the cosmos and then himself, "and there is only serenity."²⁸ As such Aipotu is founded on the undoing of distinctions. The result is the opposite of serene. The major manifestation of this lack of differentiation can be seen in the relationship between Dan Grady and Joshua Hickman. Described by Joshua as "best of friends" (34), they imitated each other in their mutual desire for Lydie. But, as Girard points out, imitating the other's desire leads to increased rivalry, inevitably collapsing into reciprocal violence.²⁹ This lapse into non-differentiation is seen both in the content and structure of the scene in which Jeremiah and Joshua reenact the fatal confrontation between Dan and Joshua. At the conclusion of the fight, it is impossible to tell which man has won. Jeremiah remembers:

The fight is over. Faces so bloody I cannot tell who is who. I run to the standing one. My father, I embrace him for saving me. I wipe the blood from my father's valiant face. It was you (33).

This loss of differentiation is mirrored in the increasing loss of differentiation in the narration as Jeremiah and Joshua relive the fight. The story begins with Joshua narrating the events from his point of view, and Jeremiah from his. As the confrontation between Jeremiah and Dan heightens, however, the voices become confused. Jeremiah begins to take his father's place, "Go buy another one. My father said that" (32), and Joshua takes Jeremiah's "I didn't I didn't I

didn't steal the Moxie" (33). Jeremiah, in turn, takes Joshua's place; "I said, I think you're kid's a liar" (33). At this point in the narration, the relationship between actor and role has become completely arbitrary—either character can take on the role of any other character in the story. The next step beyond this dislocation of identity and language is violence, a violence that ends with the two men appearing indistinguishable from each other.

The ultimate motivation for the violence is ambiguous. In *Gardenia*, Joshua says that he killed Dan Grady out of rage at losing Lydie to him,³⁰ and Gussie reiterates that explanation in *Lydie Breeze* (16). In Jeremiah and Joshua's reenactment of the scene, however, all discussion of the murder as the result of jealousy disappears beneath a more obscure narrative. According to Jeremiah and Joshua the quarrel erupted because Joshua accused young Jeremiah of stealing his bottle of Moxie. Thus explained, the violence appears more disturbing and mysterious, since it is so out of proportion with the incident that occasioned it. It also has the effect of relegating Lydie to the margins of the action as a mere observer, rather than the cause of it. The violence becomes totally a matter between men.

With Lydie removed as the occasion of the quarrel, the struggle becomes more overtly sexualized. "You and my father went at it" Jeremiah reminds Joshua, describing them as being "like two dogs stuck together in heat" (33). The bottle of Moxie itself becomes phallic, and the drinking of it, an act of fellatio: "Your kid's got his lips wrapped around other people's belongings" Joshua tells Dan (32). Lydie is replaced by a feminized Jeremiah, who revels in "two men fighting over my honor" (33). The crisis at Aipotu climaxes as the men's homosocial relationship, forged over Lydie, collapses into an exclusively male society in which male desire is no longer mediated by a woman, but becomes homosexual. Although the play is entitled *Lydie Breeze*, and the play appears to be built around her, her displacement in this key scene by a thirteen year-old boy with a "bottle of Moxie" between his lips reveals how insubstantial her role really is. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has discussed at length in her valuable refinement of Girard's theory of mimetic desire, *Between Men*, the boundary between (sanctioned) male homosociality and (prohibited) male homosexuality leads to an anxiety-ridden double bind:

For a man to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men.' Those terms, those congruences are by now endemic and perhaps ineradicable in our culture. The question of who is free to define, manipulate, and profit from the resultant double bind is no less a site of struggle today than in the eighteenth century, however.³¹

In *Lydie Breeze*, Guare exhibits the homophobic fears that mark modern Western patriarchy, without, however, critiquing them.³² Indeed, I would argue that the play ultimately seeks to modify the sexism and homophobia of the patriarchal order he presents, rather than dismantle it. *Lydie Breeze*'s predominance in the play is a red herring, which serves to draw focus away from the phallic "bottle of Moxie" that provokes the monstrous struggle.

From this point of view, what is actually being mourned in *Lydie Breeze* is not Lydie, but the exhilarating and lethal struggle of two men locked in the throws of monstrous non-differentiation. "Killing your father is the only true moment in my life," Joshua tells Jeremiah, "I keep the horror of it pressed to my skin like a hair shirt." At the most critical moment in the history of Aipotu, Lydie is reduced to being an onlooker. Just as her daughter is later reduced to the status of a linking object, *Lydie Breeze* is revealed to be no more than a pretense in the violent struggle between men. Indeed, Jeremiah's mere reappearance, years later, is enough to make Joshua, otherwise the agent of differentiation, to lose sight of the difference between Jeremiah and his father: "I could kill you all over again" rages Joshua as the curtain falls on the first act (37). The male violence is what Joshua wants to regain, not his lost wife.

In this respect, a study of *Lydie Breeze* can suggest an addition to Girard and Sedgwick's presentations of mimetic desire. Rather than being a disaster which mimetic desire is drawn into against its will, monstrous non-differentiation may, like Freudian neurotic repetition, may be something that can be lost, mourned for, and desired again. In other words, the monstrous itself can become the object of mourning. This desire for the collapse of differentiation can exist simultaneously with the desire for order. In *Gardenia*, Guare is ambivalent about the carnivalesque Aipotu. In *Lydie Breeze*, the same ambivalence surfaces in his treatment of the monstrous.

V

Understanding the dynamics of the monstrous in *Lydie Breeze* heightens our appreciation of the deep ambivalence of the play's conclusion. It establishes what might appear to be a stable, patriarchal order, but it actually reinscribes that order with the same problems that led to the murder of Sam Grady, the suicide of *Lydie Breeze*, and the destruction of Aipotu.

The last scene of the play leaves us with three characters—Lydie, Joshua and Jude. Two important events take place: (1) Jude gets Joshua's approval to come and court Lydie, and (2) Joshua begins to teach Lydie how to read. This final scene goes out of its way to emphasize Joshua's social role as patriarch, though the question of whether he is indeed Lydie's biological father is never fully resolved. When, for example, Jude asks Joshua for his permission to court Lydie, Joshua replies, "What are you asking me for?" (54) Once again, Joshua seeks to avoid any responsibility for Lydie, as he has throughout the play. Jude, however, is not so easily put off. "You're her father," (54) he reminds Joshua,

and Joshua accepts this attribution diffidently: "Oh, yes. I'm her father" (55). The importance of this paternal role is further stressed by Lydie, who calls Joshua "pa" no less than five times between Jude's exit and the end of the play. The father-daughter relationship is finally confirmed by Joshua in his last speech. Reading the passage from Whitman to Lydie, he instructs her to read it herself. "You try it, daughter," he says (56). In answering her "pa" with his "daughter," while answering her demand to be taught with his teaching her to read, the relationship between patriarch and daughter is finally consummated.

The poem that they read together, Walt Whitman's "On the Beach at Night Alone," appeared earlier in this cycle of plays. In *Women and Water*, Lydie Breeze recited part of the poem to young Joshua, who was suffering from malaria, and had asked, "Let me hear a voice. Say something . . . words . . . I'm burning up."³³ It reappears at the beginning of *Gardenia*, as Joshua read the poem to himself. Now, at the end of *Lydie Breeze*, it appears again, both as a reminiscence of the founding of the Aipotu for Joshua, and as the beginning of Lydie's introduction to the mysteries of the written word. The poem remains the same throughout the varying fortunes of Joshua throughout the cycle, testifying to a belief in a higher, benevolent order that sustains all things, however individual and distinct:

This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.³⁴

Whitman's 'vast similitude' contains distinct entities within it, without constraining them or obliterating differences. A trope of Utopian order, it interconnects discrete phenomena (spans) and contains (encloses) them. It provides connection without any loss of differentiation. Guare finds in Whitman's poem an image of non-coercive order that might provide a sanctuary from monstrous violence.

VI

Guare creates a Utopian object that resonates off Whitman's image—a silk net. Overwhelmed by the announcement of Beaty's death, Lydie is convinced that her mother wants her to commit suicide. She believes that the death of her companion, Beaty, was a sign from her mother, especially since Beaty's body was found tied with rope—a motif that echoes Lydie Breeze's death by hanging. As Lydie rushes out onto the beach, believing that Beaty is calling her, she is pursued by Jude Emerson, who explains to her how he catches birds:

JUDE. Listen to me. Where I work—I'd like you to see it. I have a silk net. On four posts. The net is silk. See. I put food under the net and wait with a string attached to the net. The birds fly under the net for food and when enough birds . . .

LYDIE. Beaty holds out her hands to me!

JUDE. Lydie? Listen to me! I pull the string. The net falls. It doesn't hurt any of the birds. They're not really trapped (48).

At first, Lydie does not seem to hear Jude, and continues to imagine that she sees and hears Beaty, but Jude goes on with his description of how birds are caught and banded. Finally, Lydie responds to him; "A net? A silk net?" (48). Despite the fact that she did not immediately respond to the image, it is clear that she heard it, and it has drawn her away from her suicidal fantasy and toward life. At this moment, Lydie Hickman, who has been haunted by death and afraid of maturing, becomes reconciled to living. She calms down, and resolves to go with Jude to identify Beaty's corpse for the authorities. For the first time, in a play filled with fearful characters, Guare calls attention to Lydie's calm:

JUDE. You mustn't be scared.

LYDIE. I don't think I am. No (48).

The intervention of Jude and his description of the net intervenes between Lydie and her self-destructive grief. Suddenly, unlike either her father or Beaty, Lydie is able to accept a bereavement, neither denying the death of the deceased (as Beaty had) nor putting herself in a death-in-life (as Joshua had). Moreover this adjustment takes place quickly, in contrast to the decade of arrested grief that has so enfeebled the Hickman household. Jude Emerson (whose name appropriately fuses the Roman Catholic patron of lost causes and the pre-eminent American transcendentalist philosopher), with his image of the silk net, effects a remarkable reversal of Lydie's story—from impending disaster to happy ending.

The net is defined by its opposing qualities. It provides constraint, but it does so gently, being made of silk. In fact, Jude goes so far as to say that the birds "aren't really trapped." On a realistic level, this is impossible; Jude saying, in effect, that the birds are somehow both caught and not caught. As a poetic image, however, the net functions as a Utopian object, one that limits without coercing, holds without depriving liberty, and balances structure with individual desire. In the net, as in Whitman's poem, the play's ongoing tensions appear to be resolved.

Yet this resolution is only achieved at the expense of Lydie Hickman's relationship to her mother. The poem that unites Joshua and Lydie as father and daughter, "On the Beach At Night Alone," has been condensed by Guare in such a way as to expunge an important maternal presence from it. Whereas Whitman begins:

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song [. . .]³⁵

Guare omits the second line. While Whitman's poem is composed to the obligato of a maternal voice, not his own, Guare's revision of the poem makes the male poet the sole singer, the patriarchal bard. Having removed the misleading female writing of Lydie Breeze's letter and Beaty's accusation, a female authorial voice is not allowed to reassert itself into the play's closing speeches. Lydie Hickman is to be educated in a silken net woven by men.

Thus, the play's ending seems a very simple praise of male power. Lydie Hickman has not committed suicide, but has accepted change and maturation. Joshua has gone from a embittered, alienated man, to a man who is tending to his daughter's education. The tragic destruction of present life by the past, represented by the ghosts and syphilis, has been replaced by a concern for the future, as Jude is coming to call on Lydie. The ending seems to resemble Jude's silk net, in which individual desires are not silenced within a beneficent order. The ideal society is configured as a simple, virtually schematic patriarchy, with Lydie Hickman, her father and her beau. This Lydie, unlike her mother, is virginal, and asks her father for instruction. With this new, "purified" Lydie, the reading of Whitman at the origin of the commune can be re-enacted, with its instabilities eradicated. Relegated to reading a man's text to a man, her voice is subsumed, under the rubric of "education," within a male-dominated culture. "We're all that's left" explains Joshua (55). It would appear Guare has manipulated an extremely complex plot to a peculiarly simple conclusion.

To achieve this illusion of stable closure, however, Guare has implemented an extensive strategy of exclusion, of which Whitman's "old mother" was but a small part. In fact, he has gone to great lengths to remove any perilous desires and forces from the play. Gussie, Lucian, Beaty, Jeremiah, Mason and William Randolph Hearst are all absent by the play's final scene, leaving only Joshua, Lydie, Jude in the play's society. Joshua may be a gentle and reluctant patriarch, but that is counterbalanced by Guare's wholesale purge of female sexuality, gay sexuality, matriarchy, the carnivalesque, theatrical impersonation, and the free play of desire from the play. The benign image of the silk nest is somewhat misleading when applied to *Lydie Breeze*, because it draws the audience's attention away from the ruthless determination with which closure has actually been achieved.

Violent closure is certainly not unique to *Lydie Breeze*. As Henry Schmidt has argued, this violence is part of the nature of dramatic endings:

The dramatic text is unalterable and hence unyielding; characters convert into stereotypes, and alternative lines of development are cut off, producing a solution that the reader is coerced to accept. The drama's voices (that is, its ideologies) unite in seamless harmony, silencing all other voices. This triumph of the whole is literally and

figuratively totalitarian. By compressing the action that lead to it, an ending negates the process of its production.³⁶

But the vehemence with which the patriarchal order is pursued in *Lydie Breeze* is particularly surprising because the patriarch in the play has been so reluctant. In the final scene, it is Jude and Lydie, who through their insistence, manipulate him into a role that he has not sought. Guare carefully cultivates the appearance that patriarchy can be the silk net in which no one is trapped. He even goes so far as to banish a blatantly coercive patriarch, William Randolph Hearst, from the play.

Hearst, the strongest patriarchal power in *Lydie Breeze* remains offstage. The newspaper magnate is a demonic parody of the writer Joshua Hickman; he has all the bloody resoluteness that Joshua lacks. From his yacht, he is planning the Spanish-American War, while his guests slaughter birds for recreation. He is planning to make Amos Mason the next president of the United States. Hearst's power is awesome: "Mr. Hearst decides what all the folks in America should think and then they think it," Gussie explains (11). Unlike Jude's silk net, Hearst's power is violent and coercive. Unlike Beaty, he does not efface differences; he works to clarify the confused story that Lydie brings to the yacht, puts an end to Amos' affair with Gussie, and works to reinstate Amos's wife, Gertrude. His sole error comes from his belief in the written word; he does not doubt the truth of a letter from Beaty, that claims Amos Mason infected her with syphilis. (This error creates an irony that is only apparent to those who have read both *Gardenia* and *Lydie Breeze*, since it transpires that Amos, who engineered the destruction of Joshua's true account of the Aipotu in the former play, falls victim to a false account in the latter. Amos' disrespect for the word wrecks its own revenge.) In banishing Hearst, the imperialist patriarchal order is banished in favor of a new, kinder and gentler, system of male power.

By stressing the illusion of full consent to the patriarchal system, Guare configures the society of *Lydie Breeze* as a liberal democracy that is fundamentally paternalist. In this configuration, male power is mythicized as the result of universal consent to a beneficent power. The gambit is a familiar one, whether seen in the claim that native peoples prefer to be colonized, or in arguments that suggest that the oppressed really desire their oppression. In this respect, *Lydie Breeze* can be seen as the manipulation of young Lydie, its heroine, to the point where she will request education from the paternal figure. The play works to create a liberal utopia in which order is maintained and differentiation maintained without any visible violation of individual wills. Jude, Lydie and Joshua are free, but only to take on clear, unambiguous and unshifting roles within the patriarchal order. It is, furthermore, a platonic utopia, from which the potentially disruptive effects of theatrical mimesis have been banished. Lydie frees herself from the ropes implied in a notion of Fate, only to submit to a more highly internalized method of social control. Lydie Hickman's

submission to the silk net is, Guare implies, the price she must pay for her survival.

VII

It would be facile, however, to present Guare's conclusion to *Lydie Breeze* as merely one of ruthless exclusion, since the exclusionary strategies are qualified by a series of details that serve to weaken and qualify Joshua's power. First, Joshua, the play's patriarch, is seemingly incapable of reinstating himself, and is only put into place by the desires of others. Second, Joshua does not regain his authorial voice, but is reduced to repeating the Whitman poem that was read to him by Lydie Breeze. Rather than a creator of texts, he is merely one step in their dissemination. Third, Joshua is far from omniscient; he does not know how to decode the message that young Lydie received from her friend Irene Durban, a secret code that tells Lydie that Irene has begun to menstruate (8, 55). This communication testifies to an ongoing, second language, shared by women and related to their bodies, which Joshua cannot decipher, let alone decode. If *Lydie Breeze* is a sort of belated version of the *Oresteia*, in which matriarchy gives way to patriarchy, it is interesting that the play can include no Orestes, no active agent on the part of patriarchal order.³⁷ For all his efforts to hold on to that order, Joshua emerges far more as a governmental figurehead than an absolute monarch. He is virtually obsolescent, but Guare cannot imagine a vision of order without him. Guare's paternalist system, sufficiently powerful to insure difference but without any will to power itself, is, like Jude's silk net, a Utopian object.

We are not yet finished plumbing the complexities beneath this superficially simple ending, for it also admits another interpretation, in which the patriarchal triangle shows itself to be inherently unstable. In this interpretation, Aipotu is re-established, with the same internal dynamics that led to its destruction. Here young Lydie remains an absence. Just as she was annihilated at the beginning of the play for the purposes of Beaty's mourning, here she is reduced to reincarnating Lydie Breeze for Joshua, as she reads the text that her mother read to her father years ago. Lydie Hickman remains, in short, a linking object, who has gained no autonomy. Rather, by being both figurative mother as well as Jude's girlfriend, she has become the apex of yet another triangle of mimetic masculine desire. She has rejected death and reunion with her mother, only to be overwhelmed by Lydie Breeze yet again. Joshua has found another Dan Grady in Jude, thus regaining his monstrous desire. In this reading, the silk net ultimately proves to be but one more form of the House of Usher. The ultimate response to mourning in *Lydie Breeze*, then, becomes the restitution of a system of gender dynamics that are the same as those that brought about the original loss. The silk net becomes an imaginary web of relationships that projects its meaning on characters who are little more than ciphers within it, and are not much different from Guare's description of the Monster:

who's controlled by all the dreams of the parts he's made out of. Other people's dreams. Other people's nightmares. It scares the bejusus out of you (15).

In this interpretation, the silk net and the *Frankenstein* monster become indistinguishable. The dynamics of mourning in *Lydie Breeze* repeatedly reinscribe the initial situation, allowing no movement forward, but an inherently conservative movement by which earlier, destructive situations are repeatedly reinstated. On this level, Guare's dynamics of mourning become the basis for a cyclic view of history.

Whether or not *Lydie Breeze* presents a way to escape from this dynamic is unclear. Gussie, with her eye always on the forthcoming American century, leaves the Hickman household with inventor Lucian Rock. Rather than submitting either to a sense of inevitability, as Beaty and Jeremiah do, or to a scheme of liberal education, as Lydie does, Gussie embraces the comic, creative possibilities of sheer chance. When Lucian comes to the Hickman house, looking for Lydie Hickman, Gussie, by pretending to be the woman Lucian seeks, takes advantage of a fortuitous circumstance to find a way to wealth, mobility, and freedom from the Hickman household. Whereas Jude can save Lydie with his silken net, Lucian offers Gussie freedom by virtue of his "high speed sewing machines adapted for industrial use" (52), which are to be presented to all the courts of Europe. Lucian's sewing machines represent yet another form of achieving coherence, but that coherence is so mechanical that it is completely oblivious to individual characteristics; Lucian cannot distinguish Gussie from Lydie. In a parody of the play's conclusion, the same dynamic that allows Lydie to substitute for her mother in the household allows Gussie to escape the patriarchal configuration. Although Lucian comes to ask Joshua for his daughter's hand, he gets another daughter, one who chooses her own suitor and does not ask for her father's blessing, but his silence. Both Gussie's hand and Joshua's silence are easily obtained. By throwing herself into the arms of Yankee ingenuity and entrepreneurship, she is able to escape from her father, but only at the price of repudiating any identity of her own. Lydie Hickman may be the prisoner of her family's past, but is able to forge some relationship between past, present and future. Gussie may be freed, but cuts herself off from her past to embark on a wayward journey, in which pain must be repressed; "Lucian Rock might hear me wheeze, but he'll never hear me cry" she boasts (53).

Whether Lucian's sewing machines are more humane than Frankenstein's sutures or Jude's net is left unresolved, but it is clear that by assuming the role of the blinded daughter, Gussie is manifesting the same actorly incompleteness of identity that Guare so condemned in Jeremiah. The costs of not remaining within the silken net, Guare suggests, may be much higher than staying within it, since the net sustains the benign fiction that its captives are free individuals. At the same time, the comic delight with which we as an audience applaud Gussie's comic imposture suggests that there may be a world outside of the silken

net, in which notions of stability and wholeness give way to an exhilarating and vertiginous play of mistaken identities and serendipitous encounters. Against the sober and responsible image of Joshua and Lydie reading Whitman must be placed the comic triumph of Gussie who may have run "out the dark back door into the bright light of mythology" (52). Gussie's escape suggests a comic revival of the unstable, actorly qualities that were treated tragically in the figure of Jeremiah, qualities that are free of mourning, and mourning's ties to the past. But is that freedom from mourning a liberation or a lobotomy? Guare does not answer.

Much of the fascination of *Lydie Breeze* comes from this very refusal to choose between the options represented by Joshua Hickman's two daughters. The audience is left suspended between the rival claims of past and future, stasis and movement, tradition and innovation, responsibility and imposture, liberal humanism and postmodernism. Guare's deep-seated ambivalences keep the play from achieving the "unyielding" and "totalitarian" properties of dramatic closure described by Henry Schmidt.³⁸ Rather, *Lydie Breeze* encapsulates, and holds in suspension, many of the key oppositions of contemporary American culture. Through his highly imaginative use of an earlier period, Guare fashions a work that speaks to the highly ambivalent dichotomies of our own era—and offers no panacea.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Notes

This paper is, in large part, the result of a production of *Lydie Breeze* that I directed at Hobart and William Smith Colleges during the winter of 1993. I owe a great deal to the cast and crew of that production, and especially its designer, Ralph Dressler, for deepening my understanding of the play. Stephanie Barbé Hammer, of the University of California-Riverside, and Jim Gullede, read drafts of the essay, and enriched it with their responses.

1. T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936) ll. 189-192; 423-425.

2. *Lydie Breeze* is the fourth play in a projected tetralogy. The first play, *Women and Water*, brings the founders of Aipotu, an experiment in communal living, together, against the background of the American Civil War. It is followed by *Gardenia*, which chronicles the tensions that grow up within Aipotu, leading to the murder of Dan Grady, and Joshua Hickman's imprisonment. The third play, *Bulfinch's Mythology*, has yet to be performed or published. See Guare's notes to *Women and Water* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1990) 3. *Gardenia* and *Lydie Breeze* premiered in 1982, at, respectively, the Manhattan Theatre Club, and American Place Theater. *Women and Water* premiered at the Los Angeles Actors Theater in 1984.

3. Although the term "play of mourning" can be translated into German as *Trauerspiel*, the genre I am defining here has only a distant kinship to the *Trauerspiel*, as explored by Walter Benjamin in his "Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels," *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, sec. 1, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Herman Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978). For Benjamin, the *Trauerspiel* presents a dramatic landscape of ruins, in which the sense of absence is all-pervasive, while in the plays of mourning I am discussing, the sense of absence is localized within a dramatic character who is deceased.

4. The importance of rites in *Hamlet* has been discussed extensively, see Jacques Lacan "Mourning and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. James Hulbert, *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977) 11-52 and Bruce Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1982): 64-67, for two of the more incisive discussions.

5. Michael Goldman, *The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama* (New York: Viking Press, 1975) 37.

6. Wilshire 31.

7. Lacan, "Desire" 38.

8. Peter Marris, *Loss and Change*, revised edition (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986)

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9. For discussions of the mourning process, see Vamik Volkan, *Linking Objects and Linking Phenomena: A Study of the Forms, Symptoms, Metapsychology and Theory of Complicated Mourning* (New York: International UP, 1981) 25-27, and Marris vii-x.

10. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, ed. Edward Hubler (New York: New American Library, 1963) 1.2.187-188.

11. John Guare, *Lydie Breeze* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1982) 8. All further citations from this play will be cited in parentheses. Both the heroine of this play and the eponymous figure share the same first name—"Lydie." For purposes of clarity, I will refer to the mother as "Lydie Breeze" and the daughter as "young Lydie" or "Lydie Hickman," even though the daughter's paternity is in doubt.

12. Guare, *Women* 103-104.

13. John Guare, *Gardenia* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1982) 19.

14. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *Collected Papers* volume 4. trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1949) 157-158.

15. Guare, *Gardenia* 7.

16. 49.

17. For Guare's conscious use of *The Tempest* as intertext, see *Gardenia* 40-41.

18. See Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden (New York: Delta, 1968) 40-41, 126-127. René Girard makes a related argument when he speaks of the Father as the one who insures difference in Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins UP, 1972) 59-61.

19. Volkan 318.

20. According to Volkan's categories of "complicated mourning," that is, mourning that refuses to resolve itself through a gradual reorganization of the bereaved's relationship to the deceased, Joshua and Beaty would represent, respectively, examples of the two major categories, reactive depression, and established pathological mourning. See Volkan 67-113.

21. William Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957) 5.2.141-146.

22. Lacan, "Mourning" 38.

23. For discussions of gender disruption in mourning, see Neil L. Tolchin, *Mourning, Gender and Creativity in the Art of Herman Melville* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1988) 33-34, 75-76, and Stephen Bernstein et al., "Changes in Patients with Gender-Identity Problems after Parental Death," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 138.1 (1981) 41-45.

24. For the history of these and other anti-theatrical tropes in many forms, see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, California: U of California P, 1981).

25. In Guare's *Six Degrees of Separation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), Paul resembles Jeremiah in his role as an imposter. Guare takes Jeremiah's sexual ambiguity farther, however, by making Paul openly gay. Like Jeremiah, Paul is purged from the world of the play, and disappears into the shadowy underworld of the prison. Unlike Jeremiah, however, Paul continues to have a positive influence on Ouisa, and is given the last line of the play. *Six Degrees*, in short, manifests a growing positive appreciation for the actor-figure on Guare's part, and—perhaps—for gays.

26. It should be pointed out that Lydie takes exception to Joshua's book in Guare, *Gardenia* 58-59, but her exceptions pertain to the vision of the book, not its factual accuracy.
27. Girard 33-67.
28. Guare, *Women* 104.
29. Girard 146-149.
30. Guare, *Gardenia*, 59.
31. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985) 89-90. For Sedgwick's critique of Girard, see *Between Men*, 21-25.
32. A similar linking of homosexuality to violence and a loss of differentiation can be seen in the violence between Bert and Donny in Guare's *Landscape of the Body* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1978).
33. Guare, *Women* 29.
34. Walt Whitman, "On the Beach at Night Alone" in *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982) 401.
35. Whitman 400.
36. Henry J. Schmidt, *How Dramas End: Essays on the German Sturm und Drang, Büchner, Hauptmann, and Fleisser* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Michigan UP, 1992) 10.
37. For the most influential interpretation of the *Oresteia* along these lines, see J. J. Bachofen, *Myth, Religion and Mother Right: Selected Writings*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1967). For a persuasive reading of the trilogy that argues for a more sophisticated view of gender in the work, see Simon Goldhill, *Language, Sexuality, Narrative: the 'Oresteia'* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 193-194, 279-281.
38. Schmidt 10.