
"The Game Show": An Excerpt From "Booming: A Millennial Memoir"

Author(s): Alice Jardine

Source: *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3/4, Gender and Culture in the 1950s (Fall - Winter, 2005), pp. 261-284

Published by: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40004428>

Accessed: 11-05-2020 19:20 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

The Feminist Press at the City University of New York is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Women's Studies Quarterly*

"THE GAME SHOW": AN EXCERPT FROM *BOOMING: A MILLENNIAL MEMOIR*

ALICE JARDINE

What follows is excerpted from Chapter 6 of Alice Jardine's unpublished novel, *BOOMING: A Millennial Memoir*. (A synopsis of the entire novel appears below.) In this chapter, entitled "The Game Show," the main character, Baby, meets up with a gang of notorious "honorary blondes," all with a special relationship to the American 1950s: Anne Sexton, Anne Parsons, and Sylvia Plath, but also Jean Harlow, Madonna, Betty Page, and Jayne Mansfield. These extraordinary women have banded together within the virtual space of *BOOMING* to stage a 1950s-style game show. Their goal? They want to help Marilyn Monroe (the ultimate 1950s blonde) better understand why she had to die when and how she did.

BOOMING: A SYNOPSIS

Baby's Daddy died shortly after her birth in 1951. Mom thinks he was murdered. It's Baby's job to use her capacity for Booming¹ in order to figure out who killed him.

Baby's Daddy worked at Los Alamos after the war, but not on the bomb. No, his was an even more secret project known as EPPAP: The Eugenics Project for a Post-Apocalyptic Planet. This early bio-genetics project was ostensibly funded by the World Health Organization, but secretly by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Mom thinks that Daddy was killed because of his work on viral cloning and DNA. Baby's not so sure. What she does know is that there are shadowy forces still searching for her Daddy's experiment write-ups. And these forces seem to think she has them. She also knows that her own lack of a belly button and her Mom's total dependence on TV in order to communicate are just plain weird and somehow intrinsically connected to her Daddy's death.

Baby's quest to find out how and why her Daddy died leads her to

[WSQ: *Women's Studies Quarterly* 33: 3 & 4 (Fall/Winter 2005)]
© 2005 by Alice Jardine. All rights reserved.

the unsettling discovery that not only is her Daddy dead, but so is DADDY—the concept, the body, the purpose, the institution. She learns that his death has affected the Baby-Boom generation in ways that are not yet entirely understood. What is clear is that, for Baby-Boomers, the death of Daddy-The-Body has led to physical regression; the death of Daddy-The-Warrior to profound fearfulness; the death of Daddy-The-Provider to deep unhappiness; the death of Daddy-The-Hero to rampant paranoia; the death of Daddy-The-Husband to romantic cynicism; the death of Daddy-The-Lover to sexual dystopia; the death of Daddy-The-White-Master to ever more insidious forms of racism.

As Baby explores these historical consequences of the Father's demise, her travels take her from Paris, through Bangkok, to Serowe, Alexanderplatz, and Palm Springs. Slowly, Baby begins to put together the pieces of an exorbitant plot too horrific to believe. She learns of the project "Mr. Magico" and is terrified by its really bad guys (Roy Cohn, Desi Arnaz, Howard Hughes). She is also moved by the stories of the really good guys (Bobby Kennedy, Julius Rosenberg). She begins to put together the puzzle connecting EPPAP, the CIA, and of course DESILU. And as she listens to Bette Davis, Lucille Ball, Marilyn Monroe, and Ethel Rosenberg; to Ann Parsons, Anne Sexton, and Sylvia Plath; to Dian Fossey, Joy Adamson, and Jane Goodall; to Winnie Mandela, Lorraine Hansbury, Billie Holiday, and Bessie Head—Baby finally begins to hear . . . and to understand the incommensurate horror of Daddy's Death.

And, ultimately, at the huge Elvis Resurrection Concert held in Honolulu on the eve of the New Millennium, Baby sees the truth: it is she who murdered her Father. Not that Baby had any intention of killing him. But she's indisputably the murderer nonetheless. And now an entire generation—indeed, an entire civilization—has to pay for her crime . . .

THE GAME SHOW

Sylvia Plath: ATTENTION!! ATTENTION!! OUR FIRST CONTESTANT IS MR. PHILIP WYLIE, AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING BOOK, *GENERATION OF VIPERS*, AND PRIMARY INVENTOR OF THE TERM "MOMISM."

Welcome Mr. Wylie. Now don't be nervous. Please have a seat right over here. Anne Sexton?

Anne S: Hello Mr. Wylie.

Philip Wylie: Where the hell am I? What are you madwomen up to?!

Anne S: Indeed. But don't worry. You're just fine . . . For the moment at least . . . Now, here is how The Game works.

Wylie: The Game? What Game? I demand that you let me out of here!!

Anne S: Now, now. This game is called "What's My Viper?" Now to your left are three curtains, behind which are three different opportunities for your self-betterment. Which one do you choose?

Wylie: OK. Door Number Three . . .

(APPLAUSE)

Anne S: Behind Door Number Three, our lovely JEAN HARLOW (WILD APPLAUSE) is showing the medium-sized gilded cage we will be using henceforth. Please step into it please. Yes, like that, now lock the door, Jean. Now, you will be asked a series of questions, Mr. Wylie. For each one you cannot answer, a newborn very ugly, dirty viper will be taken out of those large boxes that are an important part of your prize and introduced into your cage. If you get all of the questions wrong, of course . . . Your category is "Women in the 1950s"

Anne P: We'll help you when we can . . .

Wylie: Little Anne Parsons?????

Anne S: Quiet. OK. Question number one: What year was Aid to Families with Dependent Children granted to single female heads of household?

Wylie: Oh, I know that kind of stuff: 1958.

Anne S: Very good. Question number two: By 1960, what percentage of married women were working outside of the house?

Wylie: 32 percent, I think.

Anne S: Very, very good indeed. Now Mr. Wylie: Between 1960 and 1962, how many women had been talked into “surgical menopause”?

Wylie: Uh . . . Uh . . .

Anne S: Time’s up!!! Five million women, Mr. Wylie!!! Hysterectomy as the answer to all that filthy, God and Country undermining Momism huh?? Did you take the test to see if maybe you are yourself one of these dreaded MOMS? Mr. Wylie, in 1953 some 80 percent of the hysterectomies performed in five major hospitals under study were shown to have been unnecessary—30 percent showing no disease at all in the womb; 39 percent open to criticism; and 12 percent “unfortunate”. . . One male GYN put it like this: “Perhaps women live too long. Maybe when they get through having babies they have outlived their usefulness.” (ADD A VIPER!)

Wylie: But wait. That’s not my fault!!! Argghh. Get that thing away from me . . . !!!

Anne S: Mr. Wylie: Who wrote *The Natural Superiority of Women*?

Wylie: Why Mr. Ashley Montagu of course, in 1952 . . . I demand . . .

Sylvia P: What percentage of men and women were married after World War II?

Wylie: That’s easy. 96.4 percent women and 94.1 percent men.

Anne S: Please identify at least twenty superior women—of world renown—who did important work in the 1950s.

Wylie: Uh, Uh . . .

Marilyn: Helene Deutsch and Karen Horney, for example . . .

Wylie: Oh, yes. Well . . .

Sylvia P: Grace Paley, Cynthia Ozick, Flannery O’Conner, May Sarton, Elizabeth Bishop . . .

Wylie: Uh, Ayn Rand? Oh yes, Margaret Mead.

Anne S: Good, good. Anybody else?

Audience: Rachel Carson, Hannah Arendt, Diana Trilling, Janet Flanner, Gwendolyn Brooks, Georgia O’Keefe, Martha Graham . . .

Wylie: Grandma Moses, perhaps . . . ?

Anne S: What do you think, you girls “who bend men like wire” according to Mr. Wylie?

In unison: A small, filthy viper!

Wylie: Ugh . . . HELP!! They’re going to kill me!! This is murder!!

Anne S: Mr. Wylie, on what TV program in the early fifties did a lead character say: “Don’t need no woman as long as I got my horse!”

Wylie: I have no idea!!

Anne S: Too bad, Mr. Wylie . . . (Another!) Oh, by the way, it was *Fury* . . . One of your favorite shows no doubt . . .

Marilyn: Mr. Wylie, in what year were American women finally able to get credit, buy their own houses, and make contracts?

Wylie: Heeeeeeeeeeeelp . . .

Marilyn: Not until 1964, Mr. Wylie. Now what do you think of that!! (Another.)

Anne S: What were four of the common behaviors recommended to women in the fifties in order to keep their man?

Wylie: How should I know . . . Please help me. I'll do anything . . .

Anne S: 1. SMILE! OK EVERYBODY SMILE!! 2. FLATTER! WHY MR. WYLIE, YOU DO LOOK HANDSOME WHEN YOU'RE ALL WORKED UP LIKE THAT! 3. TEASE! NOW, MR. WYLIE, WOULD YOU LIKE FOR US TO GET THOSE HORRIBLE, POISONOUS, SLIMY THINGS OFF OF YOU? 4. ACT HELPLESS! I'M REALLY VERY SORRY, MR. WYLIE, BUT FINALLY I'M JUST TOO SCARED TO DO A THING!

LET'S HAVE A BIG ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR MR. PHILIP WYLIE. Mr. Wylie? Mr. Wylie??

Well, let's at least show our studio audience what Mr. Wylie has won today—JEAN??

Jean Harlow: Why yes, Mr. Wylie, you have won: THIS KITCHEN OF TOMORROW!!!

(DELIRIOUS APPLAUSE)

This postwar kitchen includes the newest facilities for efficiency . . . and yet it's the most livable room in the home. Here is a room where dreams of easier living will come true, with air conditioning, a quick-freeze unit, and no-splash sink with sliding grill. Notice the dish secretary and food budgeteer, and the television screen above the combined fireplace-incinerator unit. A Venetian-type partition, electrically operated, separates the cooking section from the rest of the room. All yours, Mr. Wylie, your very own psycho-environment to inhabit in an abandoned Levittown house of your choice for all eternity.

(SOLEMN APPLAUSE)

ALL THE HONORARY BLONDES: MARILYN, THIS MAN HELPED KILL YOU, YOU SEE?

Marilyn: OUR NEXT CONTESTANT IS MR. HUGH HEFNER, FOUNDER OF PLAYBOY ENTERPRISES. Good evening, Mr. Hefner. And welcome to The Game "Balance Your Blondes."

Hefner: Well, hello Marilyn. Long time no . . .

Marilyn: Mr. Hefner, behind one of the curtains to your left is your . . . Please don't worry. You're just fine . . . For the moment at least . . . Now, here is how The Game works. To your left are three curtains, behind which are three different opportunities for your self-betterment. Which one do you choose?

Hefner: OK. Door Number One . . .

(APPLAUSE)

Marilyn: Behind Door Number One, our lovely MADONNA (WILD, WILD APPLAUSE) is showing the unique new spring mattress we will be using henceforth. Lie down upon it please, while our lovely Madonna secures you in place. Yes, like that. Now, Mr. Hefner. You will be asked a series of questions. For each one you cannot answer, a blonde and quite beautiful, nude and fun-loving female dummy will be thrown on top of you. Each dummy weighs approximately 150 pounds and has been carefully proportioned for your viewing pleasure. I guess I should mention that the standard coil springs in the standard mattress under you have been replaced by two-foot-long standard kitchen knives pointed straight up. If you get all of the questions wrong, of course . . . Your category is "Sex in the 1950s."

Hefner: This is outrageous!!

Marilyn: Mr. Hefner, let me begin by asking you to please name twenty-five of the sexiest blondes that have been through Hollywood: like Mary Pickford and Mae West . . .

Hefner: Oh!! Why, the Gish sisters, Marion Davies, Greta Garbo, Alice Faye, Joan Blondell, Jean Harlow, Carol Lombard, Betty Grable, Lana Turner, Veronica Lake, Jayne Mansfield, Kim Novak, Anita Ekberg, Brigitte Bardot, Mamie Van Doren . . .

Marilyn: Go on, please . . .

Hefner: Marilyn Monroe, of course. Michelle Pfeiffer, Glenn Close, Meryl Streep, Madonna, Julie Christie, Fay Dunaway, Jessica Lange, Cybil Shephard . . . uh, Shirley Temple . . .

(AUDIENCE APPLAUDS WILDLY!!)

Marilyn: Mr. Hefner, How many black market abortions were being performed every year in this country by 1962 and how many women died from them?

Hefner: Uh, uh . . .

Marilyn: Ten million Mr. Hefner. TEN MILLION ILLEGAL, BACK ALLEY ABORTIONS! WITH FIVE TO TEN THOUSAND WOMEN DYING PER YEAR!! One blonde, please!

Hefner: Ouuumf.

Marilyn: In what year did scientists finally figure out that mammals (e.g. females) had eggs?

Hefner: Oh my God!!

Marilyn: Not until 1936!! (Add a blonde!)

Marilyn: In what year did the FDA approve the commercial marketing of the birth control pill?

Hefner: 1960. I remember well. Hey, this isn't funny!! These girls are heavy!! This is a joke, right? Hey, I was the good guy—liberated sex for the next two decades, and it was all airbrush clean!!

Marilyn: Who invented it?

Hefner: What?

Marilyn: The Pill.

Hefner: Gregory Pincus!!

Marilyn: Good ole Goody Pincus!! On whom was it tested?

Hefner: On poor women in Puerto Rico, and the guy didn't tell the women that some of them had placebos and they got pregnant and some had abortions . . . How's that? Is that the kind of stuff you want??

Marilyn: Good. Good. You're starting to get the hang of it . . . OK, what were the three public service areas the U.S. government ascribed to Communist plots in the fifties?

Hefner: How the hell . . .

Marilyn: Fluoridation, day care, and SEX EDUCATION! (Add another blonde!) Mr. Hefner, what year was *Lolita* published?

Hefner: Oh no, I forget . . . please don't . . .

Marilyn: (Another please!) 1955.

Hefner: OOOOHHHH. Oh God, please, I can't breathe and I'm sinking fast . . .

Marilyn: Too bad. You should have thought of that before . . . By the way, according to the Kinsey Report, what percentage of businessmen had had extra-marital affairs as of the survey?

Hefner: Um, 40 percent?

Marilyn: No!! 80 percent!! (A blonde please!) In 1950, what was the legal status of cunnilingus in this country?

AUDIENCE: YEAH!!!!!!

Hefner (small voice): I really don't know.

Marilyn: Well, that's a surprise!! It was illegal in all the states except

Illinois, Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Ohio. In Kentucky and South Carolina, it was OK if married; in New York, it was a misdemeanor. One more!! Mr. Hefner, what were the Kinsey figures on adultery?

Hefner (Tiny voice): No idea . . . AAAAHhhhhhh . . .

Marilyn: 50 percent of married men and 26 percent of married women . . . How about homosexual experiences, Mr. Hefner?

Hefner: (Silence)

Marilyn: More! 37 percent of the men and 13 percent of the women were willing to admit they had dallied, Sir . . . And—the big surprise for the American People—according to Kinsey, how many men and women masturbated regularly in the fifties?

Hefner:

Marilyn: Hello?? Uh, Mr. Hefner?? OK. So much for that. Oh, just in case you can still hear me, it was 92 percent of the men and 62 percent of the women . . . OK, let's see what Mr. Hefner has won . . .

Madonna: Mr. Hefner, why . . . you have just won your very own fifty-foot-tall, inflatable Betty Furness doll!!! Betty Furness, The Lady from Westinghouse, who helped make visiting model homes in the search for the fantasy kitchen a national Sunday afternoon pastime!! Bright, upbeat, neat, no-frills, confident, sophisticated but modest, and very modern, Betty Furness was the ideal fifties wife as glamorous hostess!! She was also gutsy: why, when the network told her they wanted her to be more like Betty Crocker, she flatly refused to wear an apron—eventually leaving the TV industry because of such unfair pressure and because, in her own words, “I had the feeling I was shrinking as the machines got bigger and people were being swallowed up by their refrigerators”!! And so, Mr. Hefner, you will exist forever alongside this model of fifties courageous wifeliness in a TV commercial of your choice. You can be sure if it's Westinghouse, Mr. Hefner . . .

(GENERAL APPLAUSE)

ALL THE HONORARY BLONDES: MARILYN, THIS MAN HELPED KILL YOU, YOU SEE?

Anne P: OUR NEXT CONTESTANT IS MR. NORMAN VINCENT PEALE, AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING BOOK, *THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING*, AND STAUNCH DEFENDER OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, RICHARD NIXON, AND THE U.S. MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. Good evening, Mr. Peale. And welcome to The Game “I’ve got a Government Secret.”

Peale: Well, hello Anne. You’re looking more and more like your father every day . . .

Anne P: Mr. Peale, behind one of the curtains to your left is your . . . Please don’t worry. You’re just fine . . . For the moment at least . . . Now, here is how The Game works. To your left are three curtains, behind which are three different opportunities for your self-betterment. Which one do you choose?

Peale: OK. Door Number Two . . .

(APPLAUSE)

Anne P: Behind Door Number Two, our lovely BETTY PAGE (DELIRIOUS APPLAUSE) is showing the very sophisticated and elaborate sound and viewing system which is now yours to keep, Mr. Peale. Please just sit there in the chair as Betty is indicating. Yes, like that. Don’t worry too much about all the leather paraphernalia—Betty is an expert! Now, Mr. Peale, you will be asked a series of questions. For each one you cannot answer—or for each question that you answer untruthfully—the clean and squeaky words THINK POSITIVE will be shot into your ears and eyes at an excruciatingly high decibel and magnification level, audible and visible only to you while the set is on your head. No, you are not allowed to take it off . . . Of course, the human body can only take so many of these assaults . . . Your category is “The Church and the State in the 1950s.”

Anne P: Mr. Peale, what did you think of Anne Morrow Lindbergh’s

best-selling 1955 spiritual meditation, *Gift from the Sea*, with its fifties style liberalish feminism—especially given that her husband had supported the Nazis in the 1930's?

Peale: I thought it was silly . . . Oh no. . . . OW!

Anne P: Mr. Peale, in 1955, what was the breakdown in the United States among the major faiths?

Peale: 68 percent Protestant; 23 percent Catholic; 4 percent Jewish; 5 percent No Preference.

Anne P: Uh huh. That must have made you very happy!! Mr. Peale, in what year, after much resistance from the religious community, did the AMA begin to officially sanction contraception as a general principle?

Peale: 1959. Please . . . this is not worthy of you . . .

Anne P: Mr. Peale, what did the phrase “I’m in trouble” refer to in the 1950s?

Peale: Unwed pregnancy.

Anne P: What happened most often to young women who found themselves in that category?

Peale: I really wouldn’t know . . .

Anne P: Let it rip!

Peale: AAARRRRRRRGGGG! Why, this is a brutal torture—positive-ly un-American!!

Anne P: Uh huh. So? Have you ever found yourself in a back alley abortionist’s office? That REALLY FELT un-American!

Sylvia P: And then there were the young women who tried to convince their doctors that they were “mad” so that they could have a

therapeutic abortion: “She was a borderline schizophrenic with homosexual and masochistic tendencies” was the magic sentence for these women, even if it meant . . .

Marilyn: And, Reverend Peale, do you know the famous study which showed that between 1941 and 1950, 75 percent of the legal, therapeutic abortions done in one midwest hospital included forced sterilization?? And how about all those unwed mothers who were diagnosed as neurotic—not to mention dominant, aggressive, narcissistic, and hostile because they must have been—to find themselves in this sinful state—schizophrenic, masochistic, psychopathic, or—worst of all—homosexual!!

Anne S: And, of course, as you well know, most unwed mothers in the fifties were sent away to “homes” where they were taught lessons in femininity and forced to give up their babies after birth . . .

Peale: This is all very impressive and I am aware there were abuses, but what’s that got to do . . .

Anne P: Uh, Mr. Peale, wasn’t the government that you supported so fervently in the 1950s engaged in widespread secret psychological research?

Peale: I’ve heard something about all of that too, but . . .

Anne P: Have you heard of MK ULTRA?

Peale: No. AAARRRRGGGGGGHHH.

Anne P: Mr. Peale, what kind of psychological research were the Republicans you supported attempting at that time?

Peale: Well, uh, I hear that drugs and hypnosis and electroshock therapy and even lobotomy were being studied to close what was called “the mind gap” . . .

Anne P: On whom were they being tested?

Peale: I don't know.

Anne P: THINK POSITIVELY MR. PEALE!!! NONE OF THIS NEGATIVE STUFF NOW . . . AFTER ALL, LIFE IS GOOD AND GETTING BETTER!

Peale: Uh . . . Well, I hear there was considerable testing performed in the fifties on stable—captive—audiences—prisoners, mental patients, soldiers . . .

Anne P: Orphans, college students, the seven hundred poor pregnant women who went to the Vanderbilt Health Clinic . . . many of whom received radiation directly into their food and water . . .

Peale: The government was just trying to . . .

Anne P: Radiation, LSD, nerve gas, electric shock, sensory deprivation . . . Have you ever heard of Dr. D. Ewen Cameron, Mr. Peale?

Peale: No. (Ohhhhhh . . .)

Anne P: Now, now. Yeah, you and Ron Hubbard are so innocent and pure . . . Ewen Cameron was the one who developed something called “Depatterning”—essentially a combination of electric shocks and LSD—and “Psychic Driving”—essentially being subjected to repetitious tape recorded messages in a sensory deprived environment. There was a joke going around among government circles that if this worked perhaps the Politburo could be brainwashed, and eventually lobotomized. We tried to bring Mr. Cameron here today for our games, but he must have burned up in hell.

Peale: I wouldn't know about that . . . (OWWWWWW).

Anne P: Now, Mr. Peale, please think positively. Even if you didn't know about these things directly, don't you think that, somehow, given how inside the Republican Party and government you were, you might at least have tried to find out . . .

Peale: No more so than your own father, who, after all, worked with army intelligence and the State Department to recruit Russian-born Nazi collaborators to Harvard while pushing out faculty considered on the Left one by one. He wasn't so great on the topic of women, either, young lady!!

Anne P: You're not telling me anything I didn't already know. Why do you think I'm here? Hey girls, my father once wrote: "The woman's fundamental status is that of her husband's wife, the mother of his children." I'm convinced that's why he wouldn't let me out of the loony bin—I wasn't fundamental enough for him . . . But we're talking about you, Mr. Peale . . .

Peale: I can't hear you . . . my ear drums are about to explode. Please, take mercy on me.

Anne P: Bells are pealing huh?? Reverend Peale, have you ever heard of Robert Carter?

Peale: No.

Anne P: Ladies, Robert Carter was one of the many thousands of people in the western part of this country who were exposed to dangerous levels of fallout and radiation from nuclear testing in the Nevada Desert by the government Mr. Peale used every means at his disposal to support and encourage.

Marilyn: Mr. Carter was marched along with his buddies as close as possible to ground zero of the "Hood Shot"—this was a hydrogen bomb—in July 1957 at the Nevada Test Site. He remembers vividly the feeling of being on fire.

Sylvia P: He and many of his compatriots also remember seeing what used to be animals and even a human or two chained in cages near the detonation site. Of course, when he told that to the doctor treating him for radiation sickness, he was immediately "committed" and "deprogrammed" through "reverse brainwashing" . . . He had to let them do it—it was the only way they'd let him out. He's a very sick man today—along with hundreds of thousands of other "downwinders."

Peale: What's all this got to do with me??

Anne P: Don't you think you had a responsibility to find out what you were using your talents as a preacher, as a guardian of people's faith, as a representative of the clean and the good and the pure, to support?!

Peale: Not at all . . . Those were different times . . . How was I supposed to know . . . ooooooooooh . . .

Anne P: Sweet dreams, Mr. Peale . . . And now for your Grand Prize!!
BETTY PAGE?

Betty Page: Why Mr. Peale, your prize is very special indeed! A life-sized, lifelike replica of—why, ME, Mr. Peale, dressed all in black leather and chains, with more outfits for you to change me into whenever you want. And that's not all!!!

(APPLAUSE)

You and "me" are going out to Ground Zero in Nevada to open up three chains of fast food: 1950s style Big Boys, McDonald's, and Holiday Inns. Only hitch is, you can only eat at these restaurants for all eternity and can never leave Ground Zero no matter what is happening to you.

(ECSTATIC APPLAUSE)

ALL THE HONORARY BLONDES: MARILYN, THIS MAN HELPED KILL YOU, YOU SEE?

Sylvia P: OUR LAST CONTESTANT IS MR. WALTER FREEMAN, INVENTOR OF THE TRANSORBITAL LOBOTOMY AND GREAT POPULARIZER OF THIS MODERN TECHNIQUE. Good evening, Mr. Freeman. And welcome to The Game "You Bet Your Beanie."

Freeman: Where am I?!

Sylvia P: Mr. Freeman, behind one of the curtains to your left is

your . . . Please don't worry. You're just fine . . . For the moment at least . . . Now, here is how The Game works. To your left are three curtains, behind which are three different opportunities for your self-betterment. Which one do you choose?

Freeman: OK. Door Number One . . .

(APPLAUSE)

Sylvia P: Behind Door Number One, our lovely JAYNE MANSFIELD (EXCITED APPLAUSE) is showing an exquisite array of "virtual" lobotomy instruments, copied exactly from those historical ones found in the Moniz Museum (named after the inventor of the frontal lobotomy, girls) and which will be used on your brain, along with your own handy dandy model ice pick twisted around in so many other people's brains with no success—this is what will happen to you each time you do not answer my question in a way that . . . Please lie down on the table now. Now, now. This is all virtual, so you can't really get hurt—and we will follow your directions with the ice pick method you so believe in. Now, if we do that, you can't get hurt, can you?? Your category is "Therapy and the 1950s."

INSERT VIRTUAL ICE PICK AND RODS!!

Now, Dr. Freeman, what were the most common forms of therapy in the fifties?

Marilyn: After all, Dr. Freeman, this was big business!! In the mid-fifties, it was determined that one out of twelve children would spend some part of their life in one of the 750,000 asylums in the United States.

Freeman: Uh—please be very, very careful there, don't wiggle them too much!! Uh, uh yes, ECT shock treatments, insulin shock therapy, sedatives, hydrotherapy, wet packs, straightjackets, implantation of silver electrodes, lobotomies . . . And of course Thorazine was introduced in 1954 . . .

Anne S: Tell me about it, you creep . . .

Sylvia P: Shhh!! Is it not true that the vast majority of patients subjected to electro-convulsive shock therapy were women—an experience that would send many of them—I know—into a state of terror for the rest of their lives?

Freeman: I guess.

Sylvia P: Can you please tell the audience what a borderline personality is?

Freeman: It didn't exist as a category in my day, although it should have perhaps—it refers to someone who hovers on the border between psychotic and neurotic behavior. It concerns patients who often lost one or both parents while children and have grown into adults who are often emotionally unstable, excessively impulsive, histrionic, seductive, needing constant external approval, loving the applause, unable to be alone, finally depressive, with crash-like reactions to rejection, and with a tendency to abuse alcohol and drugs, often ending with suicide attempts for attention. In my day, these symptoms—much more common in women—were lumped along with schizophrenia—which then led to delusions and hallucinations.

Sylvia P: Take note, girls!!

(GENERAL AUDIENCE HOOTING)

Sylvia P: And Dr. Freeman, is it not true that women (especially those who were not “submissive, dependent, emotional, and subjective” à la Farnham and Lundberg) were those who tended to be diagnosed as mentally disturbed, very often because of a “rejection of femininity”—a rejection indicated by such “symptoms” as dysmenorrhea, pain in labor, menstrual irregularity, infertility, or miscarriage? Is it not true that a large number of women were committed in the fifties simply for wanting to divorce her husband or for refusing something to her boss?

Freeman: Yes, I guess so.

(MORE GENERAL HOOTING)

Sylvia P: Dr. Freeman, why was the entire psychiatry establishment so against the Kinsey Report?

Freeman: I'm not sure it was . . .

Sylvia P: A LITTLE WIGGLE PLEASE! Oh yes, well they were very clear about it. It was the report's establishment once and for all of the dominance of the clitoral orgasm in the vast majority of women that got so many shrinks going, wasn't it??

Freeman: Uh, oh, esssss.

Sylvia P: Dr. Freeman, between 1949 and 1952—the height of your practice—how many lobotomies were performed just in the United States?

Freeman: Tens of thousands of psychosurgeries were performed around the world; about five thousand pre-frontal (that was different from mine) and trans-orbital lobotomies (mine) were performed in the United States per year during that period. By 1951, 18,608 lobotomies had been performed in the United States.

Sylvia P: What a good memory you have, Dr. Freeman.

Freeman: Uh, thank you, but could you please tell her to hold the “corer,” but especially the ice pick, very, very still at this point . . .

Jayne Mansfield: Look, buster. I was decapitated when I died. This here thing don't mean nothin' compared with that, I can assure you!!

Sylvia P: Dr. Freeman, can you please tell us—generally speaking—how a lobotomy is performed??

Freeman: Well, yes, most generally, after drilling two or more holes in the patient's skull, a surgeon (not a blonde sex kitten!!) inserts into the brain any of a variety of instruments—some of which look like an apple corer, a butter spreader, or an ice pick—and then proceed to destroy lesser or greater parts of the brain by twisting these instruments around in various ways . . .

Sylvia P: I see. TWIST THE RODS A LITTLE, KITTEN!! Dear oh dear. Dr. Freeman, were you not jealous about Dr. Moniz having won the 1949 Nobel Prize for his invention of pre-frontal lobotomy when it was really you who has the honor of having popularized it?

Freeman: One not could say nothing. No!

Sylvia P: Uh huh, TURN THE ICE PICK TO THE RIGHT AND WAVE IT AROUND A BIT! Dr. Freeman, did you go on a kind of “lobotomy spree” during the summer of 1951, driving across the country in your station wagon, stopping in towns along the way to perform well-publicized lobotomies of under ten minutes each?

Freeman: Yes . . . no . . . up . . . down . . . you I hate them no . . .

Sylvia P: Maybe a couple of electric shocks at this point with a twist to the left??

(GENERAL AUDIENCE ACCORD)

Sylvia P: Dr. Freeman, I read a newspaper story yesterday about a young black woman who was committed, in 1956, to an asylum in Columbus, Ohio (an institution with thousands of patients and only three psychiatrists, and where only 4 percent of the patients were there voluntarily) by her live-in boyfriend. This was because she had screamed and yelled at him when he told her he was leaving her with their two kids. She told the doctors how she felt unloved and abandoned and how her man beat her regularly and how she had no money and how the only thing which kept her sane were the voices—those on a tape recorder she kept with her at all times.

Marilyn: The doctors would all look at each other meaningfully and then ask her what the voices on the recorder were saying. She sat silent for a long time; she seemed to gather herself; you could see her body tautening. “Women’s rights! Women’s rights, it says.” She would then sink back in her chair wearily. The doctors diagnosed her as a case of acute undifferentiated schizophrenia with paranoid and catatonic features and locked her up. She never saw her children again.

Sylvia P: Does this story seem at all odd to you, Dr. Freeman?

Freeman:

Sylvia P: Well . . . JAYNE MANSFIELD, show Dr. Freeman how well he has done today . . .

Jayne Mansfield: Why, yes, Dr. Freeman, welcome to the friendly and cute world of fifties food!! For you have won . . . AN ETERNITY'S SUPPLY OF FIFTIES PREPARED CONVENIENCE FOODS, which—now that you've had your operation—you will be responsible for listing, out loud, in a predetermined order, each time before you get to put on your apron and cook any of it. And here's the list of goodies you have won: 10 million frozen TV dinners, 6 million cans of Jolly Green Giant peas, 5 million jars of Folgers Instant Coffee, 2 million boxes of Pillsbury Doughboy Rolls, 6 million boxes of Duff's Devils Food Mix, 1 million boxes of Swan's Down Fluff O'Mint Cake, 100 million boxes of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Mix!! But that is not all!! You have also won your very own set of Revere Ware . . .

Betty Page: Oh, I won some of those in a contest once!!!

Jayne Mansfield: . . . Pyrex and CorningWare in which to prepare these unforgettable feasts . . . all this in a solitary detention cell at the asylum of your choice.

(SUBDUED APPLAUSE)

ALL THE HONORARY BLONDES: MARILYN, THIS MAN HELPED KILL YOU, YOU SEE?

Baby: Um, excuse me, but I can't stay here much longer.

Sylvia P: OK, dear. There's just one more thing. Each of the Quatomavens gets to ask one last question—oh, not of these creeps. They're finished already anyway. But rather, she will be able to ask one last question of one man in her life, someone she loved and/or trusted with her life, and who left her with an incurable wound. I

thought we'd proceed according to how long we've been gone, most recent first . . . So . . .

Anne S: Well . . .

Sylvia P: And remember, this is for Marilyn . . .

Anne S: Well, I guess I'd like to ask Dr. Orne—my most important and trusted therapist—something . . .

Dr. Orne: Hello Anne.

Anne S: Dr. Orne, how could you?! I mean, how could you give away to the public all those tapes we did?? They were so intimate, for no one else's ears but ours . . . How could you so deeply break my trust?

Dr. Orne: I have no excuse, Anne. Please forgive me . . .

Anne S: I guess. But if this were still part of The Game, I'd make you eat those tapes—every single one of them . . . chewing very slowly. And I'd make those who took away your privacy do worse, Marilyn . . .

(SILENCE)

Anne P: OK, I'm next I guess. I'd like to speak to my father for a minute . . .

Talcott Parsons: Hello, darling.

Anne P: Hello, Daddy. Daddy, how could you let them keep me locked up in the bin when you knew—better than anyone else in the world—that my only problem was that I was too smart for a girl back then . . .?

Talcott Parsons: I don't know, honey. I'm sorry.

Anne P: Well, I'm not sure I can find it in my heart or my head to forgive you . . . and if we were still playing The Game, I would seal you

up in a small room and have it fill slowly and relentlessly with Russian library books until you were crushed . . . And I'd do worse to those who tried to put you in captivity, Marilyn . . .

(SILENCE)

Sylvia P: Ted, are you there?

Ted Hughes: Yes, I'm here. Hi.

Sylvia P: Hi. Ted. Tell me, why did you tell everyone that it was I who told you to gas our sick little bird when, actually, you were the one who broke my will and my spirit and indeed my sanity to get me to give up on its fragile little life just because you wanted the pleasure of killing it?

Ted: I don't know. It seemed inconsequential, really.

Sylvia P: That's what I thought. You know—just so as not to break the rhythm . . . You know, if we were still playing The Game, I would put an inverted bowl over your head and run a hose into it and when you talked to me like that I'd open the attached gas spigot just a little at a time until . . . And I'd do worse to those who tried to emotionally if not physically beat you into submission, Marilyn . . .

(SILENCE)

THE HONORARY BLONDES: Well, Marilyn . . .?

Marilyn: I don't have any more questions for men. None at all. I'd just like to talk to my mother for a few minutes please . . .

Baby: Well, why don't we leave you alone with her for a while, Marilyn . . . But before we go . . .

THE HONORARY BLONDES (STANDING ALL TOGETHER IN A CIRCLE WITH MARILYN, HOLDING EACH OTHERS' HANDS VERY, VERY TIGHTLY, SING TO HER IN A SOFT BUT STRONG AND UNIFIED VOICE):

Good-bye, Norma Jean . . .
 From some women in the second row . . .
 For you were something more than sexy oh . . .
 More than just our Marilyn Monroe.

Seems to us you lived your life like a candle in the wind . . .
 Never knowing who to cling to when the rain set in . . .
 And we would have liked to have saved you . . .
 But weren't we all just kids . . .
 Candles burned out long before . . .
 Our legends ever did.²

ALICE JARDINE is professor of romance languages and literatures and of studies of women, gender, and sexuality at Harvard University. She is the author of *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (Cornell University Press 1985) and of the unpublished novel, *BOOMING: A Millennial Memoir*. She is co-editor of five volumes: *The Future of Difference*; *Men in Feminism*; *Social Control and the Arts*; *Shifting Scenes: Interviews on Women, Writing, and Politics in Post-68 France*; and, most recently, with Kelly Oliver, *A Surplus of Living Attention: In Honor of the Life and Ideas of Teresa Brennan*. Her new book in progress is *Prophetic Voices: The 21st Century 1950s Style*.

NOTES

1. "Booming" refers to Baby's ability to transform herself into an un-material cipher, and to how, as such, she is able to negotiate time and space effortlessly. As a virtual girl, Baby is capable of inhabiting/speaking/listening to those who have lived in other conjunctions of space-time, whether those historical conjunctions take place in books, movies or—most importantly for her generation—on 1950s TV. In her own words: "I am but a cipher, an antenna, a channel, surfing the alpha waves of my own virtual history."
2. Parody.