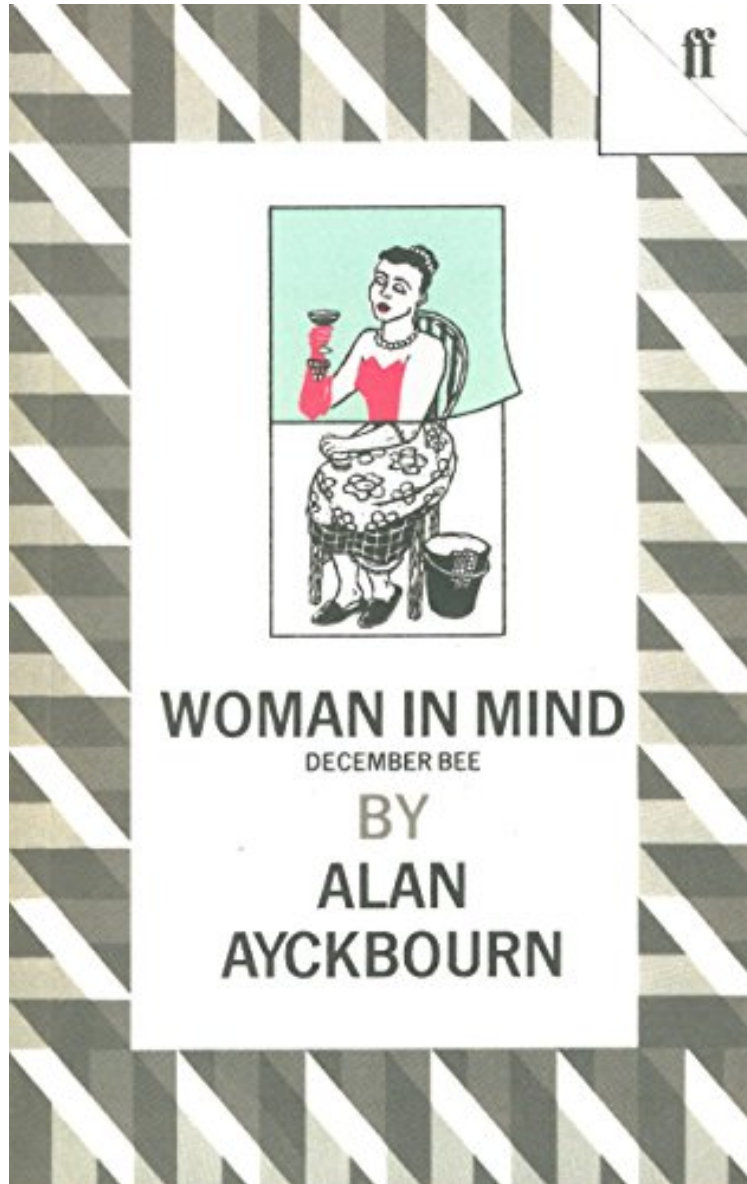


(Ebook pdf) Woman in Mind

## Woman in Mind

*Alan Ayckbourn*

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**Alan Ayckbourn : Woman in Mind** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Woman in Mind:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Funny and poignantBy KristianFunny and poignant. It's a play that will keep you on your toes and giggling. Amazed what a quick read it was.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Perhaps most complex and detailed woman character ever penned in ...By PaulPerhaps most complex and detailed woman character ever penned in a comedy...albeit Susan's descent into madness combines the pathos of

tragedy. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Ayckbourn declares war on the conventional family Pattern. By Dr Wisam Mansour. *Woman in Mind* is very remarkable for its representation and misrepresentation of reality. In the play, Susan, a totally disoriented woman, finds herself entangled in a viscous web of existence devoured by reality and virtuality. The real world she perceives is composed of her husband, Gerald, a boring clergyman, her boring and inefficient sister in Law, Muriel, and her irresponsible, introvert son, Rick, along side with Dr Bill Windsor who is a substitute doctor for the town's original medic. The virtual world on the other hand is composed of similar presence: Andy, a much more colorful and lively husband than the real one, Tony, an easy going, flamboyant brother, and Lucy, a charming and sweet daughter, along side with Bill Windsor, the family's substitute doctor. Thus *Woman in Mind* is presented on stage as well as on page in two frames or settings juxtaposed by side and sometimes superimposed on each other: the real and the virtual. In both of the frames there is the conventional, traditional family pattern. However, the only difference between the two patterns is that the real is much less colorful than the virtual. The first sordid family represents Susan's real world. A dull world inhabited by dull people. In order to escape this grisly world she creates a colorful family in her mind and begins to communicate and live with them. Her virtual husband, brother and daughter, unlike her real ones, care a lot about her, eager to please her and very sensitive to her needs emotionally and physically. So far so good. But then suddenly her virtual world, like her real one, begins to collapse. The loving simulacra she creates begin to ignore her commands, violate her privacy and take control over her real life. When she tries to resist them by trying to switch them off, she fails and her system crashes. This crash is manifested in the last scene when she no longer is able to distinguish between the real and the virtual, and all the world appears to her as a mutated virtuality. The most dangerous question the play poses is why Susan's virtual world collapses. A very simplistic answer is because reality comes first, and any rejection of reality is bound to backfire and lead to such conclusion. A very main stream understanding of a middle class British morality text. But is this all? No. Somewhere in the play itself Andy warns, or may be significantly, points out to Susan that "nothing is what it is." Indeed, the significations of the events may not look as what they appear to be. In the text, Susan in order to escape her reality of family life and marriage entrapment, resorts to fantasy. In reality, as we are made to understand, she is mainly depressed because basically her sexual and emotional needs are not well met by her clergy husband and introvert son. So to compensate, she resorts to substitution. She creates a virtual verile, slightly younger than her husband and a dotting daughter. This fantasy works for a short time and crashes badly. Her virtual reality fails because, in my opinion, she fails to exit outside the conventional matrix of every day existence. All she does to evade her conventional real life setting is to replace it with other conventional imaginary setting. The big catch that none of the play's critics and reviewers sees, lurks in this particular happening. Namely, the collapse of the unreal because it is structured exactly like the real. Reality is a fabrication of the mind, and if the mind fabricates another reality based on a previous reality that already is a fabrication, then the second fabrication, twice removed from the mind that fabricates, is usually less durable and less credible than the original. This is Platonic in essence. And when the mind starts living to the faint and indurable reality anything may happen to it. I am not trying here to say that if the woman has devised a different, non-mainstream pattern of fantasy, such as lesbian, fetishist, she would have been much better off. We will never know. The text has been created, and what is done is done; not even the god-author can undo it. What remains to say is that Susan's unreal world's collapse is the author's death sentence on conventional middle class family structure. The author passes this sentence twice in the course of the text. First, Susan's real, worldly family is a flop. The term "family" is used because the English language lacks the expression to describe the lack of it. Second, Susan's unreal family, in spite of its initial cheerful and optimistic appearance, turns to be a worse choice than the real, as it sucks and drains Susan's life force.

The central character of Alan Ayckbourn's new play is Susan, a parson's wife, 'one of the most moving and devastating that he has created...' Robin Thornber reviewing the first production in Scarborough in the Guardian.

About the Author Alan Ayckbourn was born in London in 1939 to a violinist father and a mother who was a writer. He left school at seventeen with two 'A' levels and went straight into the theatre. Two years in regional theatre as an actor and stage manager led in 1959 to the writing of his first play, *The Square Cat*, for Scarborough's Theatre in the Round at the instigation of his then employer and subsequent mentor, Stephen Joseph. Some 75 plays later, his work has been translated into over 35 languages, is performed on stage and television throughout the world and has won countless awards. There have been English and French screen adaptations, the most notable being Alain Resnais' fine film of *Private Fears in Public Places*. Major successes include *Relatively Speaking*, *How the Other Half Loves*, *Absurd Person Singular*, *Bedroom Farce*, *A Chorus of Disapproval*, *The Norman Conquests*, *A Small Family Business*, *Henceforward ...*, *Comic Potential*, *Things We Do For Love*, and *Life of Riley*. *Surprises* was first presented at the Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough, and subsequently at the the Minerva Theatre, Chichester in 2012. In 2009, he retired as Artistic Director of the Stephen Joseph Theatre, where almost all his plays have been and continue to be first staged, after 37 years in the post. Knighted in 1997 for services to the theatre, he received the 2010 Critics' Circle Award for Services to the Arts and became the first British playwright to receive both Olivier and Tony Special

Lifetime Achievement Awards.