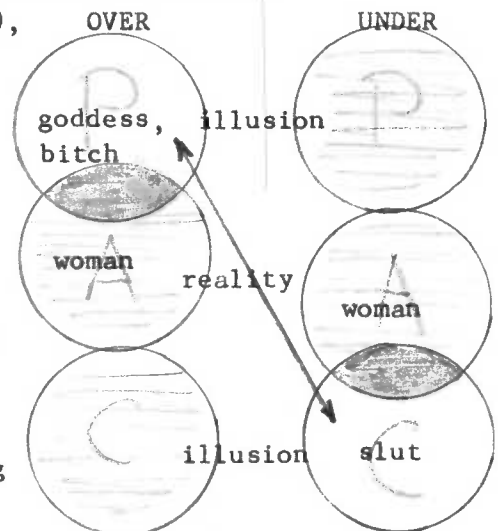


Media, especially publishers and television, are in frenetic cooperation with the justified and tardy movement for consciousness-raising, in women and men, about the female condition within the human condition. One of the Gestalten often appearing in movement and media is the over/under syndrome: the adult female as either "a lady" (a kind of goddess even, perhaps, but not an actual, real "woman") or "not a lady" (a slut, or at least a sex-determined lower being, not an actual, real "woman"). Starting with this Gestalt, lets go in a few directions:

1. Elizabeth Janeway's writings got the over/under syndrome going in the public mind. Though I am far from a master of this massive body of "woman's literature," she seems to me the clearest and highest-impact expositor of the phenomenon that adult American (and other?) males tend to look above or below but seldom at a woman, when indeed (and I add this on behalf of the non-striking adult female, of whatever age) they are not looking past or around her.
2. In this thinksheet I'm concerned mainly about the pathology of this fact. I remember Harvey Cox's efforts, in the early '60s, to give cultural documentation to this: "the cult of The Girl" (Miss America, advertising), PLAYBOY, etc. --which became the nucleus for his THE SECULAR CITY (Macmillan/65)--v. esp. chap. 7. Moral confusion reflected in superimposed images of the Madonna, The Girl as "a kind of anti-Madonna," values-reversing the Virgin (SC 196). Other, less moral-theological, angles on this the year before Cox's book: Betty Friedan's THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE. Over 100 titles since; see relevant categories in BOOKS IN PRINT 1973 (in the NYTS Library). (Theology of this fact: awe, shame, guilt.)
3. You might try, for yourself, conflating this Gestalt with various maturity-models (Piaget, Erikson, Maslow, Lowen, Berne). Let's, e.g., take that last one: here's a rough sketch of Janeway/Berne (Transactional Analysis):

The basic "game," the game of games (Berne, Harris), is "Mine's better than yours," "I'm better than you," etc., the tapes of the not-OK Child and of the prejudice-teaching Parent, the deepest psycho-root of sexism and racism (the deepest cosmo-root being the Fall). A further factor: Insecures tend to identity themselves in terms of what they aren't, a fact which pressures for role lock-ins of "the others" (females, Jews, etc.) and of oneself (by ideological self-defination by what one's against)....The two P-A-C sets here show the male over/under slip in viewing (not "seeing") the female. "A," here, is what both woman and a particular woman are: the Adult, real, data, which the male optical distortions prevent the processing of. (Play with the two contaminations, "over" as prejudice and "under" as delusions--and criticize, reversing--on p.124 of Harris, and with the two blockages: of C, 127; of P, 129. Then note the shocking pertinence of the decommissioned-A diagram on 131: sexism is psychotic.)



4. Other evidences of the over/under syndrome: Eugene O'Neill interpreted by Colleen Dewhurst ("Today" 30Jan74), the American male's split (wanting the total-security mother as "pure," and sex, the latter thus necessarily extramarital); the four types of male infidelity (traditional, narcissistic, menopausal, romantic-intellectual--in Milton S. Sapirstein, PARADOXES OF EVERYDAY LIFE (Fawcett/63), pp.132ff: O'Neill's is type #1; as compulsive, all four types destroy not only marriage but also the man--and the woman, if she permits it; type #4 punishes wife by blowing his dependencies and illusions).