

RUTH: It never seems to occur to you that I might be a little less tired but bored to death without my job.

Ruth even suggests what seems to her to be a reasonable solution if someone needs to stay at home:

REMINGTON: When you're married, are you going to stay at home and polish up while Ruth goes on running the magazine?

KEITH: It looks as if that's about the way it'll have to be.

RUTH: That's a splendid idea. Keith thinks that somebody's got to do it for a successful marriage—and I won't so (*pointing at KEITH*) why not you dear?

The argument for women seeking their own careers is summarized in capsule form by Ann, while Ruth argues for the importance of motherhood:

ANN: There isn't a single hard thing that can happen to a woman that isn't made easier by being able to make her own living. And you know it.

RUTH: I think being a mother is the most gigantic, difficult, important and thankless thing in the world.

Ann is disappointed by the final version of a sculptural relief that Tom is submitting to a prestigious competition that offers a cash award of \$100,000 for the winner. She decides, believing fully that her own ideas are probably too adventurous to be fully considered, to enter the competition herself:

ANN: Since you've been working at this, an idea has come to me. At first I thought the idea was too big for me—that I never could carry it out—and then I said I won't let myself be afraid—and it's grown and grown night and day. . . . Then you know what I'm going to do?

KEITH AND TOM: What?

ANN: Make my models and send them in myself.

REMINGTON: You don't mean it, daughter.

ANN: I do. I mean it with my whole soul.

It becomes clear when Ruth is promoted to editor of a magazine and Keith wants her to give it up that their relationship is over. Keith slowly realizes that Daisy, with whom he has been working all this time, is someone more inclined to be the kind of wife that he desires:

KEITH: I never saw tears in your eyes before. Women are funny things.

DAISY: Yes, we're funny. There's only one thing on earth funnier.

KEITH: What?

DAISY: Men.

Daisy and Ruth are in fundamental disagreement over what now constitutes and will in the future be the average woman:

DAISY: You've got so used to your own ideas you forget that I am the average normal woman the world is full of.

RUTH: Nonsense! You're almost extinct. I'm the average normal woman the world is full of—and it's going to be fuller and fuller.

Ann ends up winning the competition, with Tom coming in second. He has always been supportive of her work and, although he experiences a brief lapse in enlightenment, ultimately wakes up and returns to being both enlightened and honoring her accomplishment. Their daughter, however, returns suddenly home from boarding school with a crisis clearly needing her mother's attention and created by the fact that her mother did not allow her to come home to visit on several vacations because she was so busy working. Ann decides to take her on a trip and gets Tom to agree to execute the winning design for her in their absence, a somewhat ironic compromise because most observers consider her the person with the most brilliant vision and him the one with superior execution. Ann expresses sadness at not being able to realize fully her design herself:

ANN: I've imagined people saying—"A woman did that"—and my heart has almost burst with pride—not so much that I had done it—but for all women.

While many of the lines quoted here could reflect debates going on in households today, we need to remember that this play is 100 years old. While the characters all have strong beliefs, they also express them respectfully and with considerable dignity. Even Keith, the least enlightened of them all, is never less than courteous and thoughtful, and he probably is the sole character to express the dominant values of the year 1910.

Here is a scene from *He and She*:

ANN: [*throwing the other letters on the table*] Come here just a minute, Tom, please.

TOM: [*coming to door*] What is it?

ANN: Shut the door. It's come! [*Showing the letter.*

TOM opens it and reads it. A look of sickening disappointment comes into his face.] No? Oh, Tom!

TOM: I was their second choice!

ANN: Oh, Tom, don't take it like that. What difference does it make, after all? You know you did a big thing. It's all luck—anyway.