

JACK TINKER July 1968

HOWARD BRENTON'S *WINTER DADDYKINS*

Brighton Combination

If ever the weapons in a woman's armoury were remorselessly exposed, it is here in Howard Brenton's brilliantly incisive piece of misogamy.

This short, sharp arrow is fired not at a bull's eye but a cow's rump. For Mr Brenton is not re-fighting the conventional battle of the sexes, he is cataloguing the complete annihilation of the male species.

Against the voracious femininity of his breed of female, the unfortunate male can put up only a token resistance, He is the fly in her sticky web of domesticity, the prisoner of her cloistered visions, the discarded cockerel with his fine feathers sucked off by her incessant vacuuming cleanliness.

In fact the Winter Daddykins of Howard Brenton, having fulfilled his procreating role by supplying his mate with an idiot son and a fecund daughters, spends his life banished away in an attic designing wings with which he might fly away.

His womenfolk speak to him with a thoughtless kindness and unthinking loyalty. They feed him cabbage soup when they want to feel especially warm and maternal.

Meanwhile they go about fulfilling their feminine functions: Mum polishing the brass, dusting furniture and winding wool. Daughter Rosie having an affair in the bare spare bedroom with the local Romeo.

There is a terrible inevitability about the destruction of old Dad and his replacement by

the ensnared young lover which has all the fascination of a Greek tragedy and all the wit of a modern farce.

Fiona Baker's devastating Mummy touches on all those characteristics which make the female such a formidable, unbearable proposition: the comfy cosiness with which she deflects uncomfortable truths, the sweetness with which she disarms critics, the wrath with which she imposes her own moral code, and the indecent haste which she abandons the same when the situation suits her.

Daughter Rosie is still using tight sweaters, and mini-skirts to get her way with men, but she's learning fast. And Sue Horne adds a hen's beaky bit to the pretty chicken strut she affects.

Barry Edwards directs with a tuned eye and ear to the music of this play.