This thesis will focus on Wasserstein’s social commentary through drama and will explore the role of men in terms of their relationships with women through six Wasserstein plays. Moreover, this thesis will examine how American men changed and developed a new sense of identity, alongside women, as a result of the feminist and men’s movements. The first chapter will focus on Isn’t It Romantic (1983) and The Heidi Chronicles (1988) as a means of analyzing men’s responses to the social and political atmosphere of the 1980s. In chapter two, The Sisters Rosensweig (1992) will illustrate how men adapted to American society in flux, while An American Daughter (1997) will analyze how and why they participated in the backlash against feminism. The plays discussed in the last chapter, Old Money (2000) and Third (2005), will respectively emphasize manhood in corporate America and reverse discrimination against men.
Wasserstein was a history major at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, but when she found herself falling asleep over The Congressional Digest as she was preparing to become a summer intern for Congress, she seized a friend’s suggestion that they take a course in playwriting at Smith instead. The friend asked for one of Wendy’s plays in order to show it to director Robert Moss at Playwrights Horizons, an Off-Broadway theater. From that time, Playwrights Horizons was her artistic home and she served on its artistic board. PLAYS. Wasserstein’s later work, however, depicts men more generously than did her earlier creations.