NEGATION AND THE NEGATED:

Seeking a Sublimated Homosexual Consciousness in 1960s London

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Honor Code

On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment. I affirm that the Colorado College Honor Code has been upheld in the production of this thesis.

Drew Turley

Acknowledgements

> What is the meaning of life? That was all- a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years, the great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead, there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was one.
>
> — Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

In countless ways this thesis serves as the culmination of my undergraduate experience. My journey has been long, longer than most, and I cannot possibly express the depth of my gratitude here. Weeping, I will attempt to capture and transcribe with words those who have made a distant dream a reality. As with any human endeavor, I will probably err, but I know now that that is when learning can begin.

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Author's note

> 'Homosexual' is a barbarously hybrid word, and I claim no responsibility for it.
>
> –Havelock Ellis, *Studies in Psychology* (1897)

I use the term "homosexual" as opposed to "gay" or "queer" throughout the paper by historiographical choice. In order to speak of the experience of men who had sexual relationships with other men in London at the beginning of the 1960s, I use "homosexual" to highlight the differences between that past and our present. I seek to separate present day readers, immersed in a twenty-first-century terminology, from the ways that society and dominant culture thought about men who had sexual relationships with other men. But perhaps more importantly, I wish to highlight the difference between the ways men who had sexual relationships with other men identified themselves. At a time when labels and definitions of sexuality were supplied by a dominating culture, these same labels were adopted and employed defensively by the subjects they were meant to demarcate.

While the label "gay" was used in self-reference by small groups of men who participated in same-sex relations, it did not arise as a term of popular or positive self-labeling in either the U.S or the U.K. until after the Stonewall-riots in 1969. Terminology was just as much a struggle for men who identified with feelings or attraction for other men as for the medical and psychiatric professionals who sought to define them. Alternatively, while "queer" was used to describe "sexual strangeness" as early as WWI,[1] it was deployed derogatively as often as a term of self-labeling. A book published under a pseudonym in 1965 entitled *Queer People* attempted

[1] Matt Cook, "Queer Conflicts: Love, Sex and War, 1914-1967," in *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Matt Cook (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007), 156.

to assert the label as an umbrella term for homosexuals in Britain. But the terminology was not widely adopted for self-reference or identification. In the US there was open rebellion to using the term "queer" in a book that aimed to garner heterosexual support and understanding. While the book was published in London, homosexuals in American argued that *Queer People* sought to anesthetize the homosexual reality for heterosexual consumption. They claimed that the author offered "the term 'queer' instead of 'homosexual' [because] the latter term he fears might offend readers. He means to woo them by indulging their prejudices."[2]

Our present day use of "queer" is the result of academic efforts in the 90s and 2000s to reclaim the term in a positive and revivifying light. Despite this reclaiming of "queer," it too has lost a disruptive quality. Reanimating 'homosexual' is at the very least an attempt to employ an ethical historical methodology by respecting the self-identifications of the men I write about. At most, my use of homosexual is to continue the efforts to reject the ossification of identity labels generated to demarcate bodies by dominant society.

In addition to my word choice, I admit I focus on the realities of homosexual men rather than women. My main motivation for this is the particular threat male homosexuality posed for modern civilizations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both legislation against homosexual behavior and the enforcement of laws focused on male-same sex relationships. I have no doubt that women who are attracted to and maintain sexual relationships with other women have their own story to tell in connection to the emergent consciousness of LGBT peoples. I wonder if such a history does not deserve a feminine perspective in order to do it justice.

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[2] J. C., "'Queer People': a maddening book," *Tangents*, January8, 1966, *The Tangent Group,* Homosexual Information Center Inc., http://www.tangentgroup.org/queer-people-review/#note-6770-1.

Introduction

> Art cannot change the world, but it can contribute to changing the consciousness of the men and women who could change the world.
> –Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*

Life as a homosexual man in the 1950s and 60s was an existence within a negated space of society. To act on one's desires risked discovery, prosecution, loss of property and reputation, and either imprisonment or forms of conversion therapy like experimental hormone treatment. Besides propagating their pathetic fate for political change, homosexual men accepted the fact that their 'condition' was deplorable. Some men even sought out treatment from the medical profession. Homosexuals who sought a remedy for their condition submitted themselves to 'aversion therapy,' which involved administering electric shocks and inducing nausea while looking at pictures of men.[1] Marginalized by a dominant authority, homosexuals inhabited society peripherally, their lives both figuratively and literally invalidated.

One of the first legal manifestations of a change in attitudes toward homosexuality in the Anglo-American world was the Sexual Offences Act 1967. Passed in London, England, the law marked a change in the legal standing of homosexual men in England and Wales. My driving question revolves around individuals who inhabit marginal social conditions and their relationship to changes in law. Secular laws outlawing homosexual behavior were present in England since the time of King Henry VIII, but they became particularly harsh at the end of the nineteenth century when the prosecution no longer had to prove non-coital penetration. Previous

[1] Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present,* (London: Quartet Books Limited, 1977), 31.

to the passage of Sexual Offences Act 1967, any homosexual behavior was unlawful and could be legally prosecuted.

The issue of homosexuality was a highly relevant social consideration in mid-twentieth century London. With the end of WWII and international relations settling into a Cold War between the Communist USSR and Euro-American world, there was a renewed political focus on domestic affairs. In London, secular authorities were determined to stamp out the vice of homosexuality because they believed that its diseased nature threatened society. The post-war years saw a considerable increase in reports of homosexual behavior and in prosecutions across the country.[2] A governmental panel was formed to investigate homosexuality's relation to the law in response to one of the more sensational criminal trials in 1957. Known as the Wolfenden Committee, the panel issued a recommendation to decriminalize homosexual acts committed in private by people over the age of twenty-one. Homosexuals promoted "the plight of the homosexual" to try to gain sympathy from the public. Eliciting pity became a common tactic to sway public opinion in order to facilitate passing the committee's recommendations into law.

National and social historiographical approaches to change have helped to yield grand meta-narratives that highlight individuals of Historical-Importance and watershed moments in time. These meta-narratives of change often obfuscate the networks of people and the continuity of their actions that create ripe conditions for social ruptures. An alternative cultural historiographical approach has marked a progression of ideas and habits since the Enlightenment period. These cultural methodologies have exposed the domination of individuals and bodies by discursive knowledge structures. But these cultural narratives feel less satisfying than the

[2] See United Kingdom, *Historical Crime Data*: *Recorded Crime Statistics for England and Wales 1898-2001/2,* United Kingdom: Home Office, 2012, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/historical-crime-data and Matt Cook, "Queer Conflicts," 169.

national and social-histories because the agency of subjective selves is lost to the discursive powers of a dominant social group (seen as a whole rather than a collection of individuals). While these cultural efforts have helped us become aware of historically dominated and even erased people, the resulting narratives suggest a futility in facing dominant forces and their inevitable social control. Each approach has its merits, but their pitfalls leave room for new attempts to unwrap the past and reconsider our relationship with it. While I employ elements of both cultural and social historiographies here, I seek to recompose, or at least disrupt, narratives of change. Undoubtedly the surface of my project appears to succumb to and possibly reinforce narratives of Historicaly-Important individuals, watershed moments, *and* futility in facing inevitable social control. But it is my hope that by bringing these narratives into conversation, I can help animate the past to speak for itself.

The struggle by HIV-infected men to gain medical access in the 1980s and 90s, and the parallel struggles for social acceptance and inclusion both provide fertile ground for the study of social change. The inception of LGBT rights movements and their engagement with larger society was largely chronicled by homosexual and gay historians who saw their work as analogous to the social campaigns and demonstrations in the 1970s and 80s. These narratives focus on the tactics, strategies, and battles LGBT people waged to enact change. These stories provide valuable insight to a contemporary reader, but can suggest a sudden appearance of a socially cohesive mass ready to stand-up and fight for themselves, acutely aware of their oppression. I suspect that the origins of change and the cultivation of society to receive or demand it, eludes our understanding, lost to the eddies of time. I have sought here, in my own small way, to reexamine social phenomena that preluded the changes in the 1970s and 80s to hone in on tremors in the social fabric that portended change. During my survey, I listened to

unconventional environments for emancipatory voices. I sought an alternative insight to dominant narratives of change to contribute to a more complete mapping of change's anatomy.

Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* was published in 1964. In the book, Marcuse argued that advanced industrial societies systematically repressed the capacity to think critically. The positive force behind this repression was a technological rationality that was reciprocally justified by inserting its corresponding technological reality as its goal. Any contrary notions or ideas that disrupted the technological reality were either eliminated or absorbed by society's instrumental thinking. Among other tactics of control, society stifled the avant-garde's power of negation. Marcuse says that art once provided material conditions for contemplating two inherent truths of the human condition: man's alienation from himself and the inherent inequities within contemporary society. Before the triumph of advanced industrial society, art helped provoke revolutionary thinking by offering a negation of society. If a group of people are going to revolt against a dominating force, they must first realize their domination. This realization happens within an individual's consciousness which then results in potentiating a subjective choice to rebel. For Marcuse, revolutionary actions are predicated upon revolutionary thinking which can arise from exposure to art. In other words, art has the potential to create conditions for social change. But advanced industrial societies, by negating the ability to think critically, functioned to contain challenges the status quo.

Homosexual men in 1960s London had accepted the dominant rationality about their 'condition.' If Marcuse was correct, homosexual men were unable to find alternatives to understand themselves because the technological rationality negated those alternatives. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse left art its potential to "call men and things by their name" while also pointing to the most disenfranchised people of society as bastions capable of still initiating

change.[3] If art had the ability to create the conditions for people to recognize the inherent inequity of life, as Marcuse contends, then perhaps it played an important role in cultivating conditions for homosexuals to resist the status-quo. Marcuse's social and aesthetic theories left me to consider the following: Would a homosexual artist, rejected from society because of his 'deviance,' result in a unique relation to or understanding of the society? Can the art of a negated artist maintain its ability to invoke critical thinking? If so, does this ability emanate naturally out of the artist's negated status within society or does it require a conscious effort? Does their art resist the commodification that Marcuse believed negated the avant-garde's ability to negate society? If so, what is the mechanism that might contribute to such resistance to the dominant superstructure? Is it by way of the notoriety of an artist's marginal status or is it simply too avant-garde for mainstream consumption and thus falls into obscurity?

I have employed here Marcuse's theories about aesthetics and advanced industrial societies to evaluate the role of English theater in the successful campaign to decriminalize homosexuality in England. My motivations to use Marcuse's theories rest on what I perceive as the inability for homosexuals to think critically about themselves in the 1950s and 60s. But I admit that I am further motived to test Marcuse's social theories based upon more contemporary conditions. The technological rationality's grip on reality, of which Marcuse was so critical, doesn't seem to concern wider society. This is aided by technology's continued ability to satisfy our basic needs for existence, not to mention provide well beyond them. The capabilities of technology have far outstripped what Marcuse saw in 1964. When most of us carry around a computer in our pockets with more computational power than those that used to fill entire halls, I wonder if there is any end to a technological rationale in sight. But civilization's technological

[3] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man,* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 247, 256.

advancements, despite all their marvels, have failed to equally distribute the wealth and wonders it has produced. With the world's civilizations at the brink of ecological disaster, thanks in no small part to technology, 767 million people live in extreme poverty both in and outside of the U.S. and continue to face the tyranny of existence.[4] Could there be something wrong in the way we think? Instrumentality rears its head in education with both public and private money being funneled to STEM and professional programs while the arts and humanities in the U.S. face a potential future without government support. Marcuse's theories on advanced industrial civilization seem just as relevant to today's society as they did in 1964. So I wonder, like Marcuse, can art, especially the work of the avant-garde, help us regain an ability to think critically? Is technological rationality's non-operational view of the arts the only motivation to defund the humanities? Or is there something more diabolical at work? Being a philosopher as much as a historian makes me a humanist. And as a humanist I believe there is more to the arts and humanity than mere instrumentality. Marcuse points to the arts as potential sources for regaining our ability to think. By additionally focusing my analysis on art, I seek to test Marcuse's claim. I focus, in particular, on the homosexual playwright Joe Orton and his first play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane,* a farce that incited controversy by putting "perversion" onstage.

I will argue that at the same time as Marcuse was critiquing contemporary society, Joe Orton, a homosexual author and playwright living in London during the 1960s, was observing the same social phenomena. Although Orton's treatment of the dominant order was different from that of Marcuse's, their respective diagnoses were remarkably similar. While Marcuse worked through his issues using philosophy, Orton was creating the aesthetic indictment Marcuse prized. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was first produced in the same year that *One-*

[4] Figure is from 2013. "Extreme poverty" is defince by invidicuals living on less than US$1.90 per day. "Poverty Overview," *The World Bank, http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview*

Dimensional Man was published. While Marcuse only gestured toward the marginalized of society, a marginalized artist was "mobilizing" against a society that rejected him. An examination of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, of Orton's intentions, and of its critical reception will show his play's successful challenge to social oppression. Despite advanced industrial society's efforts to repress alternatives, Orton managed to maintain art's role of social negation.

The English government changed the laws regarding homosexuality ten years after the Wolfenden Committee made its recommendations and three years after the appearance of *One-Dimensional Man* and *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. Modern historians of British homosexuality point to the concerted media effort to engender public sympathy for an unfortunate 'disability' that homosexuals thought was necessary to effect legal change. [5] Legal reformers considered pity and understanding from the public to be vital elements in ending persecution. Despite a continuing moralistic view from authorities and the public, the efforts of homosexual men to legitimize themselves seemed fruitful in late 1960s London. Yet, because legalization included the caveat that homosexuality could only be performed "in private," homosexuals continued to face legal persecution. The bill's passage was marked by Lord Arran, who sponsored its journey through parliament. He delivered the following statement after the law was passed, "I ask those [homosexuals] to show their thanks by comporting themselves quietly and with dignity… any form of ostentatious behaviour now or in the future or any form of public flaunting would be utterly distasteful… [And] make the sponsors of this bill regret that they had done what they had done."[6]

For those of us in the present, the Sexual Offences Act 1967 can appear on its surface to be an important "first step" in the fight for LGBT rights. But it is a mistake to think of the

[5] See Cook, "Queer," 173, and Weeks, *Coming Out,* 174.
[6] Quoted in Weeks, *Coming Out*, 176.

development of rights for marginalized communities as a linear progressive force. The result of the law was to circumscribe homosexuality to the private realm and instead may be understood as an effort to encourage self-discipline among individuals. Liberation efforts from the homosexual community did not occur until the turn of the next decade. Joe Orton was a harbinger of a radically new homosexual identity that began to speak for itself and rise up against the dominant forces.

1. Entertaining Mr. Sloane

> To be destructive, words had to be irrefutable. And then the book might not be read. He was aware that words and sentences often buried themselves in the reader's mind before exploding and then went off harmlessly. Print was less effective than the spoken work because the blast was greater; eyes could ignore, slide past dangerous verbs or nouns. But if you could lock the enemy into a room somewhere and fire the sentence at them you would get a sort of seismic disturbance…
>
> -*Head to Toe,* Joe Orton

First produced by Michael Cordon (the same person to first produce Harold Pinter in 1958) at the New Arts Theater, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was not the most successful of Joe Orton's plays. Nor was the production the first time non-heterosexual relationships were depicted on the London Stage. It did, however, represent the first time on the English stage that bi- and homosexual characters were written and depicted unapologetically.[1] The young playwright was out to make a name for himself and approached his work as seriously as he took life. Often referred to as a farce, the show's outlandish and comical approach to post-war England represented a new impression of reality. The theatre is a place to revel in the relativity of life's construction, to parody the world while reminding the audience of their role in the actions onstage. What is the result when a play parodies the pretenses of reality? Farcical theater takes real life conditions and inverts them in a way that produces silly and outlandish situations. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "farce" as "a dramatic work (usually short) which has for its sole object to excite laughter; an interlude, or something as ridiculous as a theatrical farce; a proceeding that is ludicrously futile or insincere; a hollow pretence [*sic*], a mockery."[2] Similar,

[1] Nicholas de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage,* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), 94.

[2] The Oxford English Dictionary, "farce, n.". OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press.

yet distinct from farce, "satire" is "a poem or (in later use) a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humour [*sic*], irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary."[3] While "farce" relegates the actions onstage to a realm of complete unreality for the "sole" purpose of humor, "satire" is a direct engagement with "prevailing im(morality) or foolishness" and uses humor to reveal itself. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was Joe Orton's satirical treatment of English reality at a time when all homosexual behavior was illegal. And yet Orton refused any labels applied to the play saying, "Well, certainly, [the play is] not a black comedy, or whatever the currently fashionable label is. It's just a *play,* which happens to make people laugh…"[4]

ACT I

The curtain opens to a room filled with trinkets and knickknacks. A large settee, an old term for couch, sits in the middle of room. The lighting is set to indicate evening, and through the widows of the set, the audience can glimpse piles of trash and rubbish.

A bubbly middle-aged woman, Kath, is dressed in a see-through frock and enters the stage. She is followed by a young and attractive man, Sloane, wearing the National Assistance issued attire of jeans and a white crew-neck t-shirt. Kath is showing Mr. Sloane around her living room. She offers to take him on as a lodger. The woman, Kath, is clearly taken with Sloane and does little to hide her motherly and sexual affections. Her aggressive actions are juxtaposed with her innocent and moralist dialogue. She reveals to the young man that she is a widow and that she had a son. After some flirty banter about her age Kath says, "I married out of school. I

[3] The Oxford English Dictionary, "satire, n.," March 2017.

[4] Joe Orton and Simon Trussler in an interview, *Plays and Players*, Vol. 11. No. 11, August 1964, 16. Reprinted in "Joe Orton" *Drama Criticism Online*, edited by Trudeau, Lawrence J. Vol. 3, (Detroit: Gale Research, 1993), 391.

surprised everyone by the suddenness of it. (*Pause*.) Does that sound as if I had to get married?"[5] It doesn't take long for Sloane to catch onto Kath's game and realize the possibility of freeloading off his new landlord for sexual favors.

Sloane discloses himself as an orphan, his parents having died when he was eight. Kath declares, "You have the air of lost wealth."[6] Sloane tells his hostess that he came from a regular middle-class family, "From what I remember they was respected. You know, H.P. [hire purchase] debts. Bridge. A little light gardening. The usual activities of a cultured community."[7] Meanwhile, Sloane's appearance contrasts with his former middle-class back ground. He acquiesces to Kath's motherly and sexually suggestive advances, sensing her need for an object of affection.

> SLOANE. You're not alone.
> KATH. I am. (*Pause*.) Almost alone. (*Pause*.) If I'd been allowed to keep my boy I'd not be. (*Pause*.) You're almost the same age as he would be. You've got the same refinement.
> SLOANE (*slowly*). I need… understanding.
> KATH: You do, don't you? Here let me take your coat. (*Helps him off with his coat.*) You've got a delicate skin. (*Touches his neck. His cheek.*)
>
> *He shudders a little. Pause.*
>
> KATH (*kisses his cheek*). Just a motherly kiss. A real mother's kiss. (*Silence. Lifts his arms and folds them about her.*) You'll find me very sentimental. I upset easy. (*His arms are holding her.*) When I hear of… tragedies happening to perfect strangers. There are so many ruined lives. (*Puts her head on his shoulder.*) You must treat me gently when I'm in one of my moods.[8]

Kath's father, Kemp, enters the scene with thick eyeglasses and a walking stick, banging around the edges of the set to make his way through the house. Kath orders Kemp to "entertain

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[5] Joe Orton, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane*," The Complete Plays,* (New York: Grove Press, 1977), 66.
[6] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 67.
[7] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 68.
[8] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 68-9.

Mr. Sloane," and leaves them both to fix some tea. The first mention of homosexuality is when Kemp tells Sloane that he hasn't spoken to his son in twenty years. "He was a good boy. Played some amazing games as a youth. Won every goal at football one season. Sport mad, he was. (*Pause*.) Then one day, shortly after his seventeenth birthday, I had cause to return home unexpected and found him committing some kind of felony in the bedroom," Kemp recalls.[9]

Sloane's mutability emerges while talking to the old man. Commenting on the house he says, "A perfect skyline you've got here. Lord Snowdon would give you something for a shot of that. Stunning it is. Stunning. Was this house a speculation?"[10] The absurdity is that the house is situated next to a literal dump. But Kemp's non-engagement with this comment and others lead Sloane to grow more assertive. Sloane's aggressive, polymorphous survival instincts come to a head when Kemp recognizes Sloane as the murderer of his boss and threatens to expose him.

> SLOANE. Do lay off, Pop. You couldn't identify a herring on a plate!
> KEMP. Don't speak to me like that, sonny. You'll find yourself in trouble.
> SLOANE. Go on, you superannuated old prat![11]

Kemp stabs Sloane in the back of the leg with toasting fork in response to Sloane's aggression. Screaming in pain, Sloane calls out for Kath, Sloane's melodramatic response secures his role as a nurtured object for Kath's attentions. Kath scolds "Dadda" and has Sloane laid out on the settee. In the process she has Sloane's trousers off in order to treat his wound. She reassures Sloane as she begins to bandage his leg, "Don't be embarrassed, Mr. Sloane. I'd the upbringing a nun would envy and that's the truth. Until I was fifteen I was more familiar with Africa than my own body. That's why I'm so pliable." Kath's lines shine in opposition to her

[9] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 71.
[10] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 72.
[11] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 74.

actions and self-described moral history. Despite the ridiculous circumstances she continues her sexual advances.

> KATH (*confidentially*). I've been doing my washing today and I haven't a stich on… except my shoes… I'm in the rude [*sic*] under this dress. I tell you because you're bound to have noticed…
>
> *Silence.* SLOANE *attempts to reach his trouser pocket.*
>
> Don't move, dear. Not yet. Give the blood time to steady itself.
>
> SLOANE *takes the nylon stocking from between cushions of settee.*
>
> I wondered where I'd left it.
> SLOANE. Is it yours?
> KATH: Yes. You'll notice the length? I've got long legs. Long elegant legs. (*Kicks out her leg.*) I could give one or two of them a surprise. (*Pause*.) My look is quite different when I'm in private. (*Leans over him.*) You can't see through this dress can you? I been worried for fear of embarrassing you.
>
> SLOANE *lifts his hand and touches the point where he judges her nipple to be.*
>
> KATH (*leaps back*). Mr. Sloane– don't betray your trust.
> SLOANE. I just thought–
> KATH: I know what you thought. You wanted to see if my titties were all my own. You're all the same. (*Smirks.*) I must be careful of you. Have me naked on the floor if I give you a chance. If my brother was to know... (*Pause*.) … he's such a possessive man. (*Silence. Stands up.*) Would you like to go to bed?[12]

Kath sends young Sloane off to bed for some rest and calls Kemp back into the lounge. After she scolds the "Dadda," Ed, Kath's brother and Kemp's son, enters the stage. Kemp refuses to speak to his son and asks that Kath inform Ed that he won't be "signing nothing." The terse interaction between father and son establishes each man's relation to the other.

> KEMP. He knows I'm always in on Friday. (*Pause.*) I'm signing nothing you can tell him that.
> KATH. Tell him what?
> KEMP. That I'm not signing nothing!
> ED (*entering)*. Is he still on? What's the matter with you?

[12] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 78-9.

KEMP *does not reply*.

Always on about something.
KEMP. I'm not speaking to him.
ED (*patiently*). Go on, get out of it afore I kicks you out. Make me bad you do. With your silly, childish ways.

Kath sends 'Dadda' off to go and fetch Mr. Sloane's suitcase from his last residence. Ed has learned of his sister's new lodger and wants to make sure of the situation. If the audience hasn't yet realized just how caught up in appearances the family is, how separated the realities of these characters are from their language, the dialogue now makes things plain.

ED. I don't want men hanging around.
KATH. He's a nice young man.
ED. You know what these fellows are– young men with no fixed abode.
KATH. No.
ED. You know what they say about landladies?
KATH. No, Eddie.
ED. They say they'd sleep with a broom handle in trousers, that's what they say.
KATH (*uneasy*). I'm not like that.
ED. You're good-natured though. They mistake that. [13]

The dissonance continues after Ed discovers Sloane's discarded pants. "Had the trousers off him already I see," Ed says, "Don't let me down, darlin'. Where is he?"[14] Sending his sister off to fetch Sloan he continues, "And tell him to put his trousers on. Cantering around the house with a bare bum. Good job I come when I did. Can't leave you alone for five minutes?" Ed's own need for appearances becomes evident while convincing his sister not to take on Sloane as a renter. "You've got to realize my position," he says, "I can't have my sister keeping a common kip. Some of my associates are men of distinction. They think nothing of tipping a fiver. That sort of person. If they realized how my family carry on, I'd be banned from the best places.

[13] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 81.
[14] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 81.

(*Pause.*) And another thing… you don't want them talking about you. An' I can't guarantee my influence will keep them quiet. Nosy neighbors and scandal. Oh, my word, the looks you'll get. (*Pause.*) How old is he?"[15] Believing Sloane is a potential freeloading predator, Ed is resolute that the young man will have to go.

[16]Sloane is aware of Ed's attraction to him as soon as reenters the stage. Ed stumbles through a series of disjointed conversation starters in an attempt to connect with the young drifter. Sloane plays on Ed's attraction; smiling, he informs Ed that he grew up an orphanage for only boys. Ed sends Kath off to make beds, but ostensibly to secure some time alone with Sloane. Ed makes an effort to dismiss his sister and her behavior to Sloane.

> ED. I must apologize for her behavior. She's not in the best of health.
> SLOANE. She seems all right.
> ED. You can't always go on appearances. She's… well I wouldn't say unbalanced. No, that'd be going too far. She suffers from migraine. [*sic*] That's why it'd be best if you declined her offer of a room.

After Sloane insists on staying, Ed brings up Kath's former marriage and child and makes excuses for asking Sloane to leave. "The fact is my sister is taking on way too many responsibilities," he says, still trying to convince both Sloane and himself that he should go. "She's a charming woman as a rule. Charming. I've no hesitation saying that. Lost her husband. And her little kid […] She married a mate of mine – a valiant man – we were together in Africa." Whether or not this is the same 'mate' that Kemp caught Ed in bed with at seventeen isn't clear, but the implication is certainly there. Apparently the brother and sister have a history of being attracted to the same man. However, it still isn't entirely clear that Ed is smitten with Sloane or that he is a homosexual. Not until Ed perks up when he learns that Sloane is

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[15] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 82.
[16] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 83.

'interested' in the military, twenty, and not married. Sloane effortlessly adapts his persona to play to Ed's attentions.

ED. You're fond of swimming?
SLOANE. I like a plunge now and then.
ED. Bodybuilding?
SLOANE. We had a nice little gym at the orphanage. Put me in all the teams they did. Relays…

ED *looks interested*.

… Soccer…

ED *nods*.

… pole vault, … long distance…

ED *opens his mouth*.

… 100 yards, discus, putting the shot.

ED *rubs his hands together*.

Yes. yes. I'm an all rounder. A great all rounder. In anything you are care to mention. Even in life.

ED *lifts a warning finger*.

… yes I like a good work out now and then.
ED. I used to do a lot of that at one time. With my mate… we used to do all what you've just said. (*Pause.*) We were young. Innocent too. (*Shrugs. Pats his pocket. Takes out a packet of cigarettes. Smokes.*) All over now. (*Pause.*) Developing your muscles, eh? And character. (*Pause.*)… Well, well, well. (*Breathless.*) A little body builder are you? I bet you are… (*Slowly.*) …do you… (*Shy.*) exercise regular?
SLOANE. As clockwork.
ED. Good, good. Stripped?
SLOANE. Fully.
ED. Complete. (*Striding to the window.*) How invigorating.
SLOANE. And I box. I'm a bit of a boxer.
ED. Ever done any wrestling?
SLOANE. On occasions.
ED. So, so.
SLOANE. I've got a full chest. Narrow hips. My biceps are–

> ED. Do you wear leather… next to the skin? Leather jeans, say? Without… aah…
> SLOANE. Pants?
> ED (*laughs*). Get away! (*Pause.*) the question is are you clean living? You may as well know I set great store by morals. Too much of this casual bunking up nowadays. Too many lads being ruined by birds. I don't want you messing about with my sister. [17]

By this point, Ed's interest in Sloane is clear, and at the end of the conversation Ed offers Sloane a job as his chauffer. Ed asserts his intentions to take Sloane under his wing with his last line before Kath reenters the stage, "Drinking I don't mind. Drugs I abhor. You'll get to know all my habits." Sloane has played into the role Ed envisions for him, sensing another opportunity for selfish benefit from the situation.

Before leaving Ed tries in vain to get his father to speak with him. When he fails that, Ed tries to recruit his sister's assistance before leaving. With Ed gone, we learn that Kemp's obstinate attitude toward his son is matched by his fear of being abandoned by Kath. Earlier in the scene with just Kath and Ed on stage, Kath had confided to her brother that she had planned to "take [Dadda] away next year."[18] Now Kemp admits his fears to Kath that Ed will take her away from him:

> KEMP. He may take you away.
> KATH. Where to?
> KEMP. Edinburg.
> KATH. Too cold.
> KEMP. Or Bournemouth. You always said you'd go somewhere with palms.
> KATH. I'd always consult you first.
> KEMP. You'd put me in a home. (*Pause.*) Would you be tempted?
>
> *Silence*
>
> KATH. You ought to consult an oculist. See your oculist at once. (*Pause.*) Go to bed. I'll bring you a drinkie. In the morning you'll feel different.[19]

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[17] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 86-7.
[18] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 81.
[19] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 92.

Kath refuses to engage with life's messiness and brushes Kemp's concerns aside. Kath finishes with Dadda and sends him off to bed. She calls to Sloane who's been offstage eating dinner. Kath fusses about the room, putting on music, changing into "*transparent négligé* [*sic*]," and sprays the room with scent. She sets the scene for the close of the first act with her "seduction" of Sloane's. Trying to appear homey and worldly at the same time, her lust is veiled with propriety and motherly love.

> KATH. That vase over there is from Bombay. Do you have any interest in that part of the world?
> SLOANE. I like Dieppe.
> KATH. Ah… it's all the same. I don't suppose they know the difference themselves. Are you comfortable? Let me plump your cushion. (*Plumps cushion behind his head. Laughs lightly.*) I really by rights should ask you to change places. This light is showing me up. (*Pause.*) I blame the manufacturers. They make garments so thin nowadays you'd think they intended to provoke rape.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> Sure you're comfy? (*Leans over him.*)
>
> SLONE *pulls her hand toward him. She laughs, half in panic.*
> SLONE. You're a teaser ent you?
> KATH (*breaks away*). I hope I'm not. I was trying to find the letter from my little boy's father. I treasure it. But I seem to have mislaid it. I found a lot of photos though.[20]

She starts to move closer and sits herself next to Sloane on the settee. Teasing him, Kath shows him pictures of her lost husband whom she compares to Sloane. "He reminds me of you," she says, "He too was handsome and in the prime of manhood."[21] That photo is followed by one of herself when she was younger, and then by a picture of where her son "was thought of." The curtain comes down on Kath's last line and the two 'rolling around' on the settee.

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[20] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 93.
[21] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 94.

> KATH. I couldn't describe my feelings. (*Pause.*) I don't think the fastening on this thing I'm wearing will last much longer. (*The snapshots slip from her hand.*) There! you've knocked the photos on the floor.
>
> (*Pause: he attempts to move; she is almost on top of him.*) Mr Sloane… (*Rolls on to him.*) You should wear more cloths, Mr Sloane. I believe you're as naked as me. And there's no excuse for it. (*Silence.*) I'll be your mamma. I need to be loved. Gently. Oh! I shall be so ashamed in the morning. (*switches off the light.*) What a big heavy baby you are. Such a big heavy baby.[22]

CURTAIN

ACT II

Act II returns with Sloane living out his freeloading machinations. Avoiding the work that Ed has hired him to do, he plays the impetuous child with Kath. Kath dismisses his behavior as another symptom of him needing her motherly attentions. Kemp enters the stage rummaging around for 'pills.' Kath keeps up a conversation with Dadda while he makes disparaging remarks about "coloured" people who should be sent home because they go around "raping people." Meanwhile, in a hushed tone and a semblance of sign language, Kath reveals she's pregnant to Sloane. Sloane is nonplussed and makes short, clipped replies. "Sure," he says in response to Kath describing the difficulties of having a baby "at her age." Kath finds Kemp's pills and sends him off stage, reminding him not to take his pills "like sweets." She proposes marriage to Sloane, a proposal he promptly rejects. Eager to preserve his lackadaisical existence, Sloane wants to get rid of the baby before Ed finds out. Kath settles for a token of their love instead of marriage, demanding that Sloane handover the locket he wears around his neck.

Ed enters stage with a garden gnome of Kath's, just back from being repaired. He asks Sloane if he took the car out the previous evening, a query which Sloane denies. Ed sends Sloane off with the gnome while he questions Kath about the boy's comings and goings. Ed knows Sloane has been using his car and is ready to fire him. Kath responds by saying that if Ed sends

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[22] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays, 94-5.*

her "little baby" away she shall cry like she did when Ed took her real child. Ed's response clarifies that to him, Kath 'stole' away his "little matie" Tommy:

> ED. You were wicked then.
> KATH. I know.
> ED. Being rude. Ruining my little matie. Teaching him nasty things. That why I sent [the baby] away. (*Pause.*) You're not doing rude things with this kiddy, are you, like you did with Tommy?
> KATH. No.
> ED. Sure?
> KATH. I love him like a mamma.
> ED. I can't trust you.
> KATH. I'm a trustworthy lady.[23]

The scene continues with Kath denying that she was the instigator of the relationship with Ed's friend. "Tommy made me," she says, "Insisted. Pestered me he did. All summer." Ed berates Kath for entertaining the idea that Tommy loved her and wanted to marry her.

Ed's behavior with Kath may be more out of habit than viciousness. He's clearly still upset and let's his anger run its course. Ed's feelings climax when he informs Kath that he burned the letter from Tommy and her picture of him. "I thought you were taking an unhealthy interest in the past," he says. Sloane reenters stage and Ed praises the "Boy." When Kath asks if she can call Sloane "Boy," Sloane turns her down, aware that Ed calls him that. Kath exits the stage dejected and hurt from the exchange. Ed's anger still smoldering, he confronts Sloane for lying about taking his car out the night before.

> ED. Where were you last night?
> SLOANE. I told you–
> ED. I know what you told me. A pack of lies. D'you think I'm an idiot or something?
> SLOANE. No.
> ED. I want the truth.
> SLOANE. I went for a spin. I had a headache.
> […]

[23] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 107.

ED (*emotionally*). Oh, boy… Taking birds out in my motor.
SLOANE. Would you accept an unconditional apology. [*sic*]
ED. Telling me lies.
SLOANE. It won't happen again.
ED. What are your feelings toward me?
SLOANE. I respect you.
ED. Is that the truth?
SLOANE. Honest.
ED. Then why tell me lies?
SLOANE. That's only your impression.

Pause.

ED. Was this an isolated incident?
SLOANE. This was the first time.
ED. Really.
SLOANE. Yes. Can you believe me?

Pause.

ED. I believe you. I believe you're regretting the incident already. But don't repeat it. (*Silence*.) Or next time I won't be so lenient. (*Pause.*) I think the time has come for us to make a change.[24]

Ed suggests that Sloane move in with him, ostensibly to have him on call "at all hours," but more or less advancing his claim over the boy. He comes near to blatantly admitting his homosexuality saying "I seen birds all shapes and sizes and I'm most certainly not… um… ah… sensitive."[25] And Sloane, sensing his time with Kath and Kemp was soon to expire [baby or not], is eager to please. Ed laments to Sloane about his last 'matie.'

ED. I had a matie. What times we had. Fished. Swam. Rolled home pissed at two in the morning. We were innocent I tell you. Until she came on the scene. (*Pause.*) Teaching him things he shouldn't'a done. It was over… gone… finished. (*Clears his throat.*) She got him to put her in the family way that's what I always maintain. Nothing was the same after. Not ever. A typical story.
SLOANE. Sad, though.
ED. Yes it is. I should say. Of course in a way of looking at it it laid the foundation of my success. I put him to one side which was difficult because he was

[24] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 110-2.
[25] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 113.

> alluring. I managed it though. Got a grip on myself. And finally become a success. (*Pause.*) That's no mean achievement, is it?[26]

Their moment is interrupted when Kemp asks to speak with Ed. After 20 years of non-communication, Ed takes this as a sign of forgiveness. But what Kemp wants is a word alone to discuss Mr. Sloane. Kemp confesses to Ed everything about Kath and Sloane, including the pregnancy, and then points out marks on his body that show Sloane attacked him physically. Kemp is about to disclose the murder of his boss when Sloane, the consummate survivalist, interrupts them. Ed has a hard time even listening to Kemp's the story because it conflicts with his image of Sloane. After Kemp exits, Ed confronts Sloane about the accusations. Not surprisingly the issue Ed is most bothered with is not the attacks on his father, but the possibility that Sloane's been sleeping with Kath. Almost an exact repeat of what happened with 'Tommy.'

> ED. An' he said… Is she pregnant?
>
> *Pause.*
>
> SLOANE. Who?
> ED. Deny it, boy. Convince me it isn't true.
> SLOANE. Why?
> ED. So's I– (*Pause*.) Lie to me.
> SLOANE. Why should I?
> ED. It's true then? Have you been messing with her?
> SLOANE. She threw herself at me.
>
> *Silence.*
>
> ED. What a little whoreson you are you little whoreson. You are a little whoreson and no mistake. I'm put out my boy. Choked. (*Pause*.) What attracted you? Did she give you trading stamps? You're like all these layabouts. Kiddies with no fixed abode.[27]

[26] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 114-5.
[27] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 118-9.

Ed's anger rages again, this time with his passion and lust for Sloane helping to fuel the way (displayed by Ed's the repeated use of the term 'whoreson'). It might seem curious that Sloane chooses to risk his position by refusing to deny the pregnancy. Manipulation of the siblings has got him this far, so unless he sees it as another opportunity to pit them against each other, Sloane's choice might seem uncharacteristic. But given the outcome of the preceding interrogation about using Ed's car, Sloane seems convinced that, not only is denial futile, but that this is another opportunity to attach himself to an individual (the gender of his partner clearly not mattering at this point) with "two bank accounts [and] respected in [his] own right."[28] In response to Sloane's pleading, Ed reverses course and plays the savior for Sloane.

> ED. You're a constant source of amazement, boy, a never ending tale of infamy. I'd hardly credit it. A kid of your age. Joy-riding in an expensive car, a woman pregnant. My word, you're unforgivable. (*Pause*.) I don't know whether I'm qualified to pronounce judgement.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> SLOANE. I'm easily led. I've been dogged by bad luck.
> ED. You've got to learn to live a decent life sometime, boy. I blame the way you are on emotional shock. So perhaps (*Pause*) we ought to give you another chance.
> SLOANE. That's what I says.
> ED. Are you confused?
> SLOANE. I shouldn't be surprised.
> ED. Never went to church? Correct me if I'm wrong.
> SLOANE. You got it, Ed. Know me better than I know myself.
> ED. Your youth pleads for leniency and, by God, I'm going to give it. You're as pure as the Lamb. Purer. [29]

Sloane's response to the situation is to give Ed what he wants. He's fully comfortable giving himself over to Ed so long as it means maintaining the freeloading life to which he's grown accustomed. He signs a 'brotherly' pact by confirming Ed as "a pal" and "one of [his]

[28] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 115.
[29] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 120.

mates."[30] The oblique references to securing the homosexual relationship between the two becomes even more obvious in the next few lines.

> SLOANE. You've a generous nature.
> ED. You could say that. I don't condemn out of hand like some. But do me a favour – avoid the birds in the future. That's what's been your trouble.
> SLOANE. It has.
> ED. She's to blame.
> SLOANE. I've no hesitation in saying that.
> ED. Why conform to the standards of the cowshed? (*Pause.*) It's a thing you grow out of. With me behind you, boy, you'll grow out of it.[31]

Ed promises to "have a word with the old man," about the accusations Kemp tried to bring up. The couple agree that Kemp can be unruly and childish. Ed leaves to get more cigarettes but not before Sloane promises to try and work things out with Kemp, to "hold out the hand of friendship." Ed calls Kemp back in before leaving the stage. The amorphous Sloane turns aggressive upon Kemp's return. Sloane faces Kemp squarely about what Kemp has been trying to tell Ed. With the one man who refuses to compromise, Sloane tries to reason with Kemp about the older man's inability to see, let alone actually identify anything. Acknowledging the ineffectiveness of that tactic, Sloane decides to be honest. In a last ditch plea to change Kemp's mind, Sloane delivers an impassioned account of the events leading up to the 'accidental death' of Kemp's former employer.

> SLOANE (*puts the stick into* KEMP*'s hand*). I trust you, Pop. Listen. Keep quiet.
>
> *Silence.*
>
> It's like this see. One day I leave the Home. Stroll along. Sky blue. Fresh air. They'd found me a likeable permanent situation. Canteen facilities. Fortnight's paid holiday. Overtime? Time and a half after midnight. A staff dance each year. What more could one wish to devote one's life to? I certainly loved that place […] I thumbs a lift from a geyser who promises me a bed. Gives me a bath. And

[30] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,*, 121.
[31] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 121.

> a meal. Very friendly. All you could wish he was, a photographer. He shows me one or two experimental studies. An experience for the retina and no mistake. He wanted to photo me. For certain interesting features I had that he wanted the exclusive right of preserving. You know how it is. I didn't like to refuse. No harm in it I suppose. But then I got to thinking… I knew a kid once called MacBride that happened to. Oh, yes… so when I gets to think of this I decide I got to do something about it. And I gets up in the middle of the night looking for the film see. He has a lot of expensive equipment about in his studio see. Well it appears that he gets the wrong idea. Runs in. Gives a shout. And the long and the short of it is I loses my head which is a thing I never ought to a done with the worry of them photos an all. And I hits him. I hits him
>
> *Pause.*
>
> He must have had a weak heart. Something like that I should imagine. Definitely should have seen his doctor before that. I wasn't to know was I? I'm not to blame. [32]

Kemp, unmoved by Sloane's confession, promises to confront Ed and then the police. The two continue to trade barbs, with Sloane trying to get the old man to keep quiet. Kemp remains defiant till the end.

> KEMP. I'm seeing [Ed] then.
> SLOANE. Are you threatening me? Do you feel confident? Is that it? (*Stops. Clicks his tongue. Pause. Leans over and straightens* KEMP*'s tie.*) Ed and me are going away. Let's have your word you'll forget it. (KEMP *does not reply.*) Pretend you never knew. Who was he? No relation. Hardly a friend. An employer. You won't bring him back by hanging me. (KEMP *does not reply.*) Where's your logic? Can I have a promise you'll keep your mouth shut?
> KEMP. No.
>
> SLOANE *twists* KEMP*'s ear.*
>
> KEMP. Ugh! aaah…
> SLOANE. You make me desperate. I've nothing to lose, you see. One more chance, Pop. Are you going to give me away?
> KEMP. I'll see the police.
> SLOANE. You don't know what's good for you. (*He knocks* KEMP *behind the settee. Kicks him.*) All this could've been avoided. (KEMP *half-rises, collapses again. Pause.* SLOANE *kicks him gently with the toe of his boot.*) Eh, then.

[32] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 125.

> Wake up. (*Pause.*) Wakey, wakey. (*Silence. He goes to the door and calls.*) Ed! (*Pause.*) Ed![33]

As Sloane realizes what he has just done, it is also apparent who he should run to in order to save himself. Kath comes to investigate the scene but Sloane pushes her back shouting, "Where's Ed? Not you! I want Ed!"[34] Sloane has made his choice.

CURTAIN

ACT III

Act III opens with Kemp hanging on to life behind the settee. Kath speaks of reviving him contra the stage direction that "*Nobody moves*" in the text. Ed takes Kemp upstairs while Sloane admits to Kath that he hit Kemp "several times" because "he upset" him. Kath brushes the admission aside. Ed returns and while Kath is out of the room, describes the situation to Sloane.

> ED (*Taking* SLOANE *aside).* How hard did you hit him?
> SLOANE. Not hard.
> ED. You don't know your own strength, boy. Using him like a punchbag.
> SLOANE. I've told you–
> ED. He's dead.
> SLOANE. Dead? His Heart.
> ED. Whatever it was it's murder, boy. You'll have some explaining to do. (*Lights a cigarette.* KATH *enters with a carpet sweeper, begins to sweep.*)[35]

The larger effects of his actions slowly seep into Sloane as he starts to feel "upset." He asks to see Ed outside alone in order to explain what happened. After Ed refuses Sloane and states flatly "some things will have to be sorted out. A check on your excesses is needed."

> SLOANE. Are you sure he's–

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[33] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 126-7.
[34] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 127.
[35] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 129.

ED. As forty dodos. I tried the usual methods of ascertaining; no heartbeats, no misting on my cigarette case. The finest legal brains in the country can't save you now.

KATH *re-enters.*

SLOANE. I feel sick.
KATH. It's the weather.
SLOANE. No.
KATH. Take a pill or something. I had some recommended to me the other day. (*Opens a drawer, searches. She finds the tablets, shakes out two into her hand. Offers them to* SLOANE.) Take them with a glass of water. Swallow them quick. They'll relieve the symptoms.
SLOANE. I don't want them! (*He knocks them from her hand.*) I don't want pills! (*Exits.*)[36]

Sloane's sense of panic climaxes and the reality of killing another man sends him running off stage to collect himself. Kath asks Ed if Sloane is ill or in trouble. Ed, still hiding the truth about Kemp, makes an offhand reference about Sloane being in "dead trouble."[37] Kath reveals that Dadda already shared his suspicions of Slone. She had dismissed it as a product of their father's imagination. Not knowing the information Kemp had to share, Ed doesn't understand and, in like-fashion, dismisses Kath's words. Ed begins to reason through the death of his father at the hands of his would be companion, while Kath goes about her cleaning.

ED. I should have asked for references. I can see that now. The usual credentials would have avoided this. An attractive kid, so disarming, to – tell me lies and–
KATH (*enters carrying a china figure*). This shepherdess is a lovely piece of chinawork. She comes up like new when I give her a wash.
ED. Now?
KATH. The crack spoils it though. I should have it mended professionally. (*Exit. Re-enters carrying large vase.*) Dadda gets up to some horrible pranks lately. Throwing things into my best vase now. The habits of the elderly are beyond pale. (*She exits.* ED *sits on the settee.*)
ED. I must sort out my affairs and quick.[38]

[36] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 131.
[37] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 132.
[38] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 132.

Sloane reenters the scene and, calmer, resumes packing his suitcase to go with Ed. But Ed's own sense of self-preservation has kicked in, and he is resolute about Sloane facing Justice. Sloane pleads with Ed to reconsider and help him, attempting to coopt him in crafting a cover-up.

> ED. You'll get six months. More than that. Depends on the judge.
> SLOANE. What a legal system. Say he fell.
> ED. Aiding and abetting.
> SLOANE. Fake the evidence.
> ED. You're completely without morals, boy. I hadn't realized how depraved you were. You murdered my father. Now you ask me to help you evade Justice. Is that where my liberal principles have brought me?
> SLOANE. You've got no principles.
> ED. No principles? Oh, you really have upset me now. Why am I interested in your welfare? Why did I give you a job? Why do thinking men everywhere show young boys the straight and narrow? Flash cheque-books when delinquency is mentioned? Support the Scout-movement? Principles, boy, bleeding principles. And don't you dare say otherwise or you'll land in serious trouble.[39]

Ed's principles, like Kath's propriety, serve to create distance between Ed's actions and his words. Ed's angry performance is an attempt to cope with Sloane's apparent amorality.

> SLOANE. Are you going to help me?
> ED. No.
> SLOANE. We must find a basis for agreement.
> ED. There can be no agreement. I'm a citizen of this country. My duty is clear. You must accept responsibility for your actions.
> SLOANE (*sits beside* ED. *Lays a hand on his knee.*) I accept responsibility.
> ED. Do you?
> SLOANE. Fully.
> ED. Good. Remove your hand will you?
> SLOANE. Certainly.[40]

With as little as the touch of his hand to Ed's leg, Sloane reestablishes the bond between them and defuses Ed's anger. Sloane offers Ed a fulfillment of his desires. Just as quickly as Ed

[39] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 134.
[40] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 134-5.

was to point out his principles to Sloane, he makes an about face, though not without a good show of anger. But Sloane anticipates the outcome and cuts to the repentant youth, invoking the familiar form of Ed's name and playing on Ed's homosexual desires.

> ED. What you just said about no principles – That's really upset me. Straight. Really upset me.
> SLOANE. Sorry, Eddie, sorry.
> ED. One thing I wanted to give you – my principles. Oh, I'm disillusioned. I feel I'm doing no good at all.
> SLOANE. I'm very bad. Only you can help me on the road to a useful life. (*Pause*.) A couple of years ago I met a man similar to yourself. Same outlook on life. A dead ringer for you as far as physique went. He was an expert on the adolescent male body. He's completed an exhaustive study of his subject before I met him. During the course of one magical night he talked to me of his principles – offered me a job if I would accept them. Like a fool I turned him down. What an opportunity I lost, Ed. If you were to make the same demands, I'd answer loudly in the affirmative.[41]

Just as Sloane is pledging himself to Ed's service, Kath screams from offstage. When she runs onstage Ed confirms for her that they already knew and were just trying to keep from upsetting her. After a brief display of grief, Kath quickly thinks of her financial loss and her inability to 'make appearances.' "It's all the health scheme's fault. Will I have to send his pension book in?"[42] she asks Ed. When he answers affirmatively she says with nonchalance, "I thought as much." She then admits, "I shall never get into my black. I've put on weight since we buried mamma."[43] Ed begins to adopt Kath into his plans to save Sloane from Justice.

> ED. They'll hang him.
>
> *Pause.*
>
> KATH. Really?
> ED. They might. I'm not sure. I get confused by the changes in the law.[44]

[41] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 135.
[42] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 136.
[43] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 137.
[44] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 137.

Kath is confused that the justice system would see Sloane as anything other than her little baby. She dismisses "the Dadda's" death with her own excuses, "The Dadda was rude. He said a rude word about me," she says. When Ed tries to convince Kath to lie about how Kemp died, Kath suggests telling the truth. She ventures that by testifying as character witnesses they would help the court to see that the murder was an accident.

> KATH. Wouldn't they make an exception? If we gave him a good character?
> ED. He hasn't got a good character.
> KATH. We could say he had.
> ED. That would be perjury.[45]

Just as Ed convinces his sister to join the ruse she realizes that Sloane has been packing his suitcase to leave. "You're taking him away," she turns and accuses Ed. Kath struggles to accept Sloane's newly adopted attitude toward her. Sloane's apparent apathy for Kath is not new, but he no longer associates Kath with the ability to meet his needs for survival. Kath has been unaware of the consequences of Sloane's decision at the end of act II, "Where's Ed. Not you! I want Ed!"

Kath tells Ed she has "a bun in the oven" in an attempt to assert her claim over Sloane. Ed shows a lack of surprise at Kath's admission and reveals the he is already aware of all "the grisly details" of Sloane's seduction. Kath tries to maintain herself and makes a show of being offended by returning the 'symbol' of their relationship she coaxed from him in act two.

> KATH. Mr Sloane, dear, take back your locket.
> ED. What locket?
> KATH. He gave me a locket. (*She takes off the locket.* SLOANE *attempts to take it.*) I don't believe he'd take it if you weren't here, Ed. (*She puts the locket back on. To* SLOANE.) How could you behave so bad. Accusing me of seducing you.
> SLOANE. But you did!

[45] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 137

KATH. That's neither here nor there. Using expressions like that. Making yourself cheap. (SLOANE *turns to the suitcase.*) I see the truth of the matter. He's been at you. Isn't that like him?[46]

At this point the clash over Mr. Sloane's future begins. The verbal battle between the siblings is the climax of the play for which Kemp's death was but a catalyst.

ED. He's lost with you.
KATH. He's lovely with me. Charming little baby he is.
ED. No, he's soft. You softened him up.
KATH. I gave him three meals a day. Porridge for breakfast. Meat and two veg for dinner. A fry for tea. And cheese for supper. What more could he want?
ED. Freedom.
KATH. He's free with me.
ED. You're immoral.
KATH. It's natural.
ED. He's clean-living by nature; that's every man's right.
KATH. What are you going to give him?
ED. The world.
KATH (*comes round the case, looks in*). The state of this case. Mr Sloane, dear, you can't even pack. See how he needs me in the smallest things? Can't manage without a woman.[47]

Ed's last line confuses Kath, and she quickly changes the of subject. Either she is ignorant about her brother's sexuality or, more likely, she refuses to acknowledge another messy detail. Homosexuality doesn't fit neatly within Kath's reality so it is simply ignored. Ed proposes that they let Sloane choose between them. When Sloane affirms his choice of going with Ed, Kath's pathos is untethered.

KATH. Is it because I'm pregnant?
SLOANE. No. Better opportunities. A new life.
KATH. You vowed you loved me.
SLOANE. Never for a second.
KATH. I was kind to you.
SLOANE. Yes.
KATH. Are you grateful?
SLOANE. I paid.

[46] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 139-40.
[47] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 141

KATH. I paid too. Baby on the way. Reputation ruined.
SLOANE. You had no reputation.[48]

Ed drags her in front of a mirror trying to expose his sister's inadequacies to her. The two continue to trade verbal exchanges with Ed attacking Kath and she defending herself and her relationship with Sloane.

ED. Look in the glass, lady. Let's enjoy a laugh. (*He takes her to the mirror.*) What do you see?
KATH. Me.
ED. What are you?
KATH. My hair is nice. Natural. I'm mature, but still able to command a certain appeal.
ED. You look like death!

Shakes him off. He drags her back to the mirror.

ED. Flabby mouth. Wrinkled neck. Puffy hands.
KATH. It's baby coming.
ED. Sagging tits. You cradle-snatcher.
KATH. He said I was a Venus. I held him in my arms.
ED. What a martyrdom!
KATH. He wanted for nothing. I loved him sincerely.
ED. You're [*sic*] appetite appalled him.
KATH. I love him.
ED. Insatiable.
KATH (*to* SLOANE). Baby, my little boy…
ED. He aches at every organ.
KATH. … mamma forgives you.
ED. What have you to offer? You're fat and the crows-feet under your eyes would make you an object of terror. Pack it in, I tell you. Sawdust up to the navel? You've nothing to lure any man.
KATH. Is that the truth, Mr Sloane?
SLOANE. More or less.
KATH. Why didn't you tell me?
ED. How could he tell you? You showed him the gate of Hell every night. He abandoned Hope when he entered there.[49]

[48] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 141-2.
[49] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 142-3.

Ed's Dantean reference makes his attitude toward sex with women apparent. But, in an abrupt change, Ed's line also awakens Kath to her own power over the situation.

> SLOANE *kisses* KATH*'s cheek.*
>
> KATH. Baby… (*She holds him close. Looks at* ED *over* SLOANE*'s shoulder.*) Before you go, Mr Sloane, we must straighten things out. The Dadda's death was a blow to me.
> SLOANE (*releases her*). Ed can vouch for me. You can support his story.
> KATH. What story?
> SLOANE. The old man fell downstairs.
> KATH. I shall never under any circumstances allow anyone to perjure me. It was murder.[50]

Kath's invocation of power over the situation exposes Sloane's vulnerability. When Kath asserts her claim over him, Sloan's manic survival skills return. He smacks Kath and in the ensuing struggle, attempts to free himself with a power that has served him in the past, violence. The antics on stage spew into absurdity, masking the most anxious part of the play.

> ED. Let her alone boy.
> SLOANE. Keep out of this! (ED *lays a hand on* SLOANE*'s shoulder, tries to pull him away from* KATH. SLOANE *turns, shoves* ED *from him.*) Did you hear what I said? Keep out of it!
> ED. Don't be violent. No violence at any cost. (SLOANE *gets* KATH *into a corner; struggles with her.*) What's this exhibition for? This is gratuitous violence. Give over, both of you!
> SLOANE (*shakes* KATH). Support me, you mare! Support me!
> KATH. Make him stop! I shall be sick. He's upsetting my insides.
> ED (*runs round*). What did you want to provoke him for?
>
> SLOANE *shakes* KATH *harder.* She screams.
>
> KATH. My teeth! (*She claps a hand over her mouth.*) My teeth. (SLOANE *flings her from him. She crawls round the floor, searching.*) He's broke my teeth! Where are they?[51]

[50] Orton, "Entertaining*,"* *Complete Plays,* 143-4.
[51] Orton, "Sloane," Complete Plays, 146.

Ed dismisses the violent situation with angry declarations about his principles and admonishes Sloane. Kath's response to being literally manhandled by the boy is to brush it aside, still hoping to regain Sloane's affections. Sloane seems to forget himself as well, later helping her up off the floor.

> ED. Expensive equipment gone west now see? I'm annoyed with you, boy. Seriously annoyed. Giving us the benefit of your pauperism. Is this what we listen to the Week's Good Cause for? A lot of vicars and actresses making appeals for cash gifts to raise hooligans who can't control themselves? I'd've given my cheque to the anti-Jewish League if I'd known.
> KATH (*reaching under the settee*). I'll still forgive and forget.
> ED. Coming in here as a lodger. Raised in a charity home. The lack of common courtesy in some people is appalling.
> SLOANE. She's won! The bitch has won!
>
> *He grips* ED*'s arm.* ED *shrugs him away.*
>
> ED. We'll discuss the matter.
> SLOANE. We need action not discussion. Persuade her. Cut her throat, but persuade her!
> ED. Don't use that tone of voice with me, boy. I won't be dictated to. (*Pause.*) Perhaps we can share you.[52]

Sloane is both trapped but free at the same time. While he has achieved his goal for survival, he has become the object of property between Ed and Kath. Herein lies the reversal of the play's title. Sloane shoulders the reality of surrendering to the sexual needs of both Kath and Ed in order to avoid punishment for murdering Kemp. He accepts a life of sexual servitude to preserve himself. The reality though is that his sexuality has been his currency since the beginning of the play. The only change seems to be that his previously laissez-faire approach to life is reversed; his position of dominating manipulator changes to the manipulated subject at the hands of his hosts.

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[52] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 146.

ED. An arrangement to suit all tastes. That is what's needed.
KATH. I don't want to lose my baby.
ED. You won't lose him.
KATH. But –
ED (*holds up hand*). What are your main requirements? I take it there's no question of making an honest woman of you? You don't demand the supreme sacrifice?
SLOANE. I'm not marrying her!
ED. Calm down will you?
SLOANE. Remember our agreement.
ED. I'm keeping it in mind, boy.
SLOANE. Don't saddle me with her for life.
KATH. He's close to tears. Isn't he sweet?
ED. Yes, he's definitely attractive in adversity. Really, boy, what with one thing and another… I warned you against women, didn't I? They land you in impossible predicaments of this nature.[53]

Ultimately Sloane finds the decision being made for him by Ed. But Sloane doesn't necessarily seem to mind, in fact he promises to be eternally grateful to Ed for working things out. In a pragmatic response, Ed states, "Not eternally, boy. Just a few years." Ed sends him to wait in the car and bargains with his sister over the young man.

ED. Can I trust you?
KATH. Yes.
ED. The let's have no more threats. You'll support him.
KATH. As long as he stays here.
ED. You've had him six months; I'll have him the next six. I'm not robbing you of him permanently.
KATH. Aren't you?
ED. No question of it. (*Pause.*) As long as you're prepared to accept the idea of partnership.
KATH. For how long?
ED. As long as the agreement lasts.
KATH. How long is that?
ED. By the half-year.
KATH. That's too long, dear. I get so lonely.
ED. I've got no objections if he visits you from time to time. Briefly. We could put it in the contract. Fair enough?
KATH. Yes.[54]

[53] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 147.
[54] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 148-9.

The character's parting lines to each other throw further social and traditional romantic convention to the wind, as if the entire show up to this point weren't already enough. Sentimental to the end, Kath brings up the matter of the baby's birth.

> KATH. Can he be present at the birth of his child?
> ED. You're not turning him into a mid-wife.
> KATH. It deepens the relationship if the father is there.
> ED. It's all any reasonable child can expect if the dad is present at the conception. Let's hear no more of it. Give me the locket.
> KATH. It was his present to me.
> ED. You'll get it back in March. (*She hands him the locket. He puts it on.*) And behave yourself in the future. I'm not having you pregnant every year. I'll have a word with him about it. (*He kisses her cheek, pats her bottom.*) Be a good girl.
> KATH. Yes, Ed.
> ED. Well, it's been a pleasant morning. See you later. (*He exits. The front door slams.* KATH *goes to the sideboard and rummages in the drawer; takes out a sweet, unwraps it and puts in in her mouth. Sits on settee.*)[55]
>
> CURTAIN

It is important to mark the morning as "pleasant." Doing so calls out for the audience what may or may not be considered reasonable. The play has been a parody of the entirety of 1960s popular British culture, social conventions, government authority and sexual satisfactions. Orton used sex, sexuality, and the pop-culture laden common language to re-present an everyday reality he saw outside the theatre. The play's characters shroud their sexual desires using the espoused propriety of British society. Overt sexuality, murder, and homosexuality, all subjects that the public and its civic authorities considered repugnant, became something that audiences could laugh at. While refusing labels for the play, Orton admitted that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is

[55] Orton, "Entertaining," *Complete Plays,* 149.

"just a *play*, which happens to make people laugh about sodomy and nymphomania. It's a comedy insofar as the whole world and the whole human situation is comic and farcical."[56]

[56] Orton and Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from "Joe Orton" *Drama Criticism*, edited by Lawrence J. Trudeau, Vol. 3, (Detroit: Gale Research, 1993), 392.

2. Critical Responses to the play in 1964

> The books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame.
>
> –Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Entertaining Mr. Sloane opened at the Arts Theater club in London on May 6, 1964. Theatre clubs allowed stage producers to present work without having to submit the scripts to the office of The Lord Chamberlain for review. The Lord Chamberlain's Office had been in charge of theatrical censorship since the Licensing Act 1732. [1] Revised by the Theatres Act 1843 the office of the Lord Chamberlain was in charge of licensing every play intended to be performed. Banning or censoring plays was carried out in order to protect social propriety, moral decency, and public order.[2] Theatre clubs allowed producers to exploit a loophole that allowed them to present plays to members of a private club who paid dues.[3] In the 1950s a group of producers sought to put up plays that contained homosexuality and its themes. Their actions put the autonomy of the theater clubs in jeopardy. But the man serving as Lord Chamberlain in the 50s, the Earl of Scarborough, former M.P. Roger Lumley, was sensitive to public opinion and the place of censorship in modern society. After seeking the Queen's permission to examine the role of theatrical censorship and meeting with the Home Secretary, R. A. Butler, who opposed any loosening of the powers of censorship, Lumley issued an internal "secret" memorandum in 1958.[4] In the communication he said "now that it has become a topic of almost everyday conversation, its exclusion from the Stage can no longer be defended as a reasonable course."[5]

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[1] Dominic Shellard, Steve Nicholson, and Miriam Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets...: A History of British Theatre Censorship*, (London: British Library, 2004), 9.

[2] Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,* 10-11.

[3] Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,*155.

[4] Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,*157.

[5] Lord Chamberlain's 'secret' memorandum on homosexuality, 31 October 1958. Printed in Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,* plate 18.

"It" was the topic of homosexuality and though "Licenses will continue to be refused for plays which are an exploitation of the subject," the change paved the way for some of the most progressive plays in the 60s until the abolition of the Lord Chamberlain's censoring powers in the Theatres Act 1968.[6] Though homosexuality had been seen on stage, albeit in obscure and roundabout ways before *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, the play's production marked a new willingness to take on the subject in theatrical form. The play's reception reflected the embroiled position of the topic in society.

Reviews after opening night of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* were unambiguously mixed. Conservative papers like the *Financial Times*'s called it "a singularly dull and sordid play."[7] The critic, John Higgins, went on to say that,

> […] Ed has lived in a state of arrested homosexuality and Kath of repressed nymphomania. Little surprise that Mr. Sloane is a big hit, for presumably not many other eligible young men had ventured into the middle of the rubbish dump. These threads might just be spun into a short story for those who like a little primitive perversion, but a full-length play that really will not do… Against [snatches of dialogue which suggest something better in the future], there is a woeful lack of sophistication…[8]

The Daily Mail said *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was, "as mild and tedious as soap flakes."[9] Either these critics were not impressed or were so insulted that they refused to be open to such sweeping attacks on public morality and subjected to such "primitive perversion." This was a signal that Orton had struck a nerve of those who were invested in English propriety.

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[6] Lord Chamberlain's 'secret' memorandum. Printed in Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,* plate 18, and page 174.

[7] John Higgins, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane," *Financial Times* [London, England] 8 May 1964: 28. *Financial Times*. Web.

[8] Higgins, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane," *Financial Times*.

[9] Uncited, from John Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears: The Biography of Joe Orton*, (New York: Knopf, 1978), 167.

The Daily Telegraph was more ambivalent with W. A. Darlington writing that, "Not for a long time have I disliked a play so much as I disliked Joe Orton's 'Entertaining Mr. Sloane…'" But he admitted this to be a "backhanded compliment." Citing the writing ability of Orton and the acting skills of the cast, Darlington continued by saying, "I can't despise this [play] because it comes to life; I feel as if snakes had been writhing round my feet." [10]

The unnamed critic for *The Times* seemed to waffle in perplexity at the play. Titled "Hard to Define Triangle: Obscure Study of Relationships," the review was at a loss of how to "examine [the] work in relation to its writer's intentions," when the play's purposes were so obscure.[11] The critic wound up making an opaque recommendation because the play was "theatrically valid." Though the review gave two-faced comments about the show, saying that "the resulting dissonances and occasional concords are cleverly calculated," but, "the coarseness is sometimes offensive." But evidently he tolerated the coarseness because "[the offensive parts are] characteristic of the offensive people who use [them]."[12] The last line in the article, posed as a question, revealed the critic's main confusion . "Is this the world as Mr. Orton sees it, an interesting pattern of personal relationships he wished to study *or* a darkly comical account of a side of human nature he detests?" (emphasis added).[13] The writer seemed unable to fit together that the absurd patterns of human relationships themselves were the "darkly comical" subject for Orton, or that the author could revel in such a 'detestable' side of human nature.

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[10] W. A. Darlington, "A Revolting Lodger's Sway." *Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 1964, p. 18. The Telegraph Historical Archive, tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/4VWGZX

[11] "Hard to Define Triangle," *The Times* (London, England: May 07, 1964) 20, *The Times Digital Archive*, Web. http://0-find.galegroup.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=colorado&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS336029351&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

[12] "Hard to Define Triangle," *The Times*, 20.

[13] "Hard to Define Triangle," *The Times*, 20.

As if predicting the reviews in the Sunday papers, critic John Mortimer wrote in *The Evening Standard* that "all good things come to him who stands and waits, and after what now seems a long time waiting round the moth-eaten wings of commercial theatre something really quite good has come to me at last."[14] The positive responses related Orton to the post-impressionist painter Douanier Rousseau and the American Grandma Moses. He even garnered an early comparison to Wilde's wittiness.[15] Harold Hobson in *The Sunday Times* was the most perceptive critic in ascertaining Orton's intentions. "I hope I shall not be misunderstood if I say that the English author of whom Joe Orton, in 'Entertaining Mr Sloane' (Arts), reminds me most vividly is Jane Austen." Hobson wrote, "Miss Austen has a keen eye for the absurdities of the fashionable fiction of her day; and so has Mr. Orton…"[16] Hobson's comparison of *Entertaining Mr. Sloan* to Austen's *Northanger Abby* 'amazed' Orton, who said, "Hobson was the only critic who spotted what Sloane was."[17] Hobson's positive review continues, saying that "'Entertaining Mr Sloane' begins as a joke about moral horror; and as such a joke should it goes on to develop a horror of its own… It is a vision of total evil, and it is possible to perceive its merit without approving it."[18] At the same time, however, he doesn't predict much success for the writer or his play saying, "It might be a coterie success [but] I should not call it promising. It seems more like an end than a beginning."[19]

The most glowing of initial responses came from Alan Brien in *The Sunday Telegraph.* In his article, he references other contemporary reviews, specifically Higgins from *The Financial*

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[14] From Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 167.
[15] *The Observer*, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 167.
[16] Harold Hobson, "Touch of Orderliness," *The Sunday Times* (London, England), Sunday, May 10, 1964; pg. 33; Issue 7356.
[17] Orton to Glenn Loney. "Entertaining Mr. Loney: An Early Interview with Joe Orton," *New Theatre Quarterly, NTO,* Vol 4 issue 16, 1988, 302.
[18] Hobson, "Touch of Orderliness," 33.
[19] Hobson, "Touch of Orderliness," 33.

Times who said the play was full of "threads [that] might just be spun into a short story for those who like a little primitive perversion." In a complete reversal of what Darlington said in *The Daily Telegraph*, Brien wrote:

> Joe Orton, the 25-year-old author of **Entertaining Mr. Sloane** at the New Arts, has been described as a primitive. This suggests an innocent and simple-minded vision of a complex and evil world–the knee-high eyes view of a bright child in which unimportant details glow with a ghastly clarity and familiar gestures take on a fearful strangeness…
>
> Mr. Orton is more than a primitive [… and] he seems to be writing off the cuff and hitting out at random. Yet the language is a highly organized *collage* of juvenile slang, adman's jargon and soap opera clichés which can be simultaneously funny and sickening. And the action was so cunningly enough organized to make one first-nighter cry out "Oh no!" at a twist in the plot with all the absorbed naivety of a child at a Saturday morning film show.
>
> Along with Charles Wood and David Rudkin (both introduced to a theatre-going public as the Arts Theatre) Mr. Orton is one of those rare dramatists who create their own world in their own idiom. A new generation is treading on the heels of those grand old men of the Fifties, Harold Pinter and John Osborne. [20]

Pinning Orton to the avant-garde artists of his time, Alan Brien was perhaps the only critic who foresaw both the skill and talent behind *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* as well as the possibility of Orton's extended career at the forefront of English theatre. Unbeknownst to Brien, his estimates of Orton would prove correct for the most part, had it not been for the playwright's tragic murder.

After a four-week run at the Arts Theatre, the show was sponsored by Sir Terence Rattigan for transfer to the West End. Another homosexual in the London theatre, he took notice of Orton's work and decided to fund the move. Sir Rattigan enjoyed the play so much that he wrote Orton his first fan letter. "I don't think you've written a masterpiece–and you wouldn't want me to say you had–but I do think you have written the most exciting and stimulating first

[20] Alan Brien, "Guilt in the Age of Innocence," *Sunday Telegraph*, 10 May 1964, p. 14. The Telegraph Historical Archive, tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/4VWMS4.

play (is it?) that I've seen in thirty (odd) years' playgoing."[21] Sir Rattigan put up £3,000 of his personal funds to help move the show into the Wyndham Theatre. He was attracted to the classical foundation of the writing and was convinced he needed to encourage Orton's raw talent. The structure of the play, along with the hard hitting yet apparently 'naturalistic' dialogue, was enough to ensure the patronage of one of London theatre's initiated.

He recalled seeing 'style' in Orton's composition of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. "I saw Congreve in it. I saw Wilde. To me, in some ways, it was better than Wilde because it had more bite. I was delighted by Orton's feelings for words. Albee and Coward have a certain kind of verbal felicity that usually isn't meant to express character," he said, "They are still in a naturalistic tradition of dialogue. Joe had something richer. Orton was way beyond a naturalistic tradition and yet you could read it as if it were perfectly natural."[22] With the patronage of Rattigan, Orton found commercial success.

On the surface, Rattigan's comparison of Orton to Oscar Wilde was based on writing styles and made no explicit references to homosexuality. But the show's inescapable homosexuality made Rattigan's ambiguous comparison more vivid. It seems that Wilde's reputation was revived from his turn of the century social rejection. It is as if London drama critics employed Wilde's literary powers as reference points to talent and distilled Wilde's flair for dialogue from his homosexuality and fall from social grace. Orton artfully captured the sensibility of his time in the same manner as Wilde's powerful epigrams. The effectiveness of Orton's dialogue caused the comparison to stick. After seeing *Loot*, the second of Orton's plays to make it to the West End, critic Ronald Bryden dubbed Orton the "Oscar Wilde of Welfare

[21] Letter from Rattigan to Orton, 14 May, 1964, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears,* 169.
[22] Quoted in Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 168.

State gentility."[23] Orton's writing, his use of language in his character's dialogue, marked his contribution to the London stage as unique.

Transferring to the West End also meant having to pass the Lord Chamberlain's office for licensure. In studying the Lord Chamberlain's file on *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* held at the British Library, Chun-Yi Shih notes that the Office saw the play as "very unattractive," "very uninteresting," and made "no attempt to deal with the subject of homosexuality in a serious manner."[24] The censors required that many of sentences be cut. These included: "Like an old tart grinding to her climax," and "Why don't you shut your mouth and give your arse a chance?" Similarly, the expressions "old prat," "their old shit," "bugger," and "sagging tits," were cut and stage notes added.[25] Sloane was forbidden from groping Kath's breasts at the end of act I. The order came with a severe warning that stopped just short of an open threat:

> Kath's action with Sloane is not to exceed that given in the stage directions. You are particularly warned that any movements implying or simulating copulation have not been allowed and furthermore, that such actions in such a context have been described in judge's obiter dictum given in the High Court of Justice as "obscene."

Despite the edits to of some of Orton's language, critical reviews after the transfer remained positive and continued to focus on his use of dialogue. Even Darlington, who remained the lone dissenting voice, had to admit that despite the characters being "shameless and repulsive in the extreme, I have to pay the author's skill compliments of admitting that I sat through it last night a second time on its transference to Wyndham's and was held throughout."[26] *The Times* unnamed drama critic attributed the comedic effect onstage to "Mr. Orton's use of language– a poised, artificial dialect (like the buttoned-up speech of nervous witnesses in court), which

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[23] *The Observer*, September 1966, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 221.

[24] Chun-Yi Shin, "Entertaining the Lord Chamberlain: Joe Orton and His Black Comedy," *NTU Studies in Language and Literature*, Vol 20, December 2008, 51.

[25] Shin, "Entertaining the Lord Chamberlain," 51.

[26] "3 Repulsive Folk Well Acted," from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 170.

neutralizes the events it refers to. The play succeeds indeed (following the general rule for farce) in proportion to its ability to eliminate sympathetic human character."[27] Writing for *The Observer*, Bamber Gascoigne called it "like a weird and delicate modern sculpture, neatly welded out of battered old phrases and congealed lumps of words from the scrapheap of language."[28] From *The Guardian* Philip Hope-Wallace said that "The cross talk is pungent and often quite funny in its condescending scorn of pretentious but illiterate speech and cliché,"[29]

In an about face from Higgin's review in *The Financial Times*, the paper's new critic, B. A. Young, showered the production with praise. "[Orton's] dialogue has beautiful formality about it which he derived from the cunning use of demotic clichés; it has the true ring of well-observed common speech, and yet at the same time it has some of the pretty artificially of Restoration comedy."[30] Young does attempt to anesthetize the play from any critical or ulterior motives Orton had, proclaiming that his concern "is only to make us laugh." The glowing approval for his dialogue pleased Orton just as much as the remarks about the play being "shameless and repulsive in the extreme." But he was also adjusting to his new found financial success and no longer having to subsist on the National Assistance wage of £3 per week. But the production on the West End had lost the "coarseness" it had at The Arts Theatre. Having

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[27] "An Exercise in Black Comedy," *The Times* (London, England), Tuesday, Jun 30, 1964; pg. 13; Issue 56051. http://0-find.galegroup.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=colorado&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS219506398&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

[28] Bamber Gascoigne, "Five brief encounters in W.C.2: THEATRE," *The Observer*, July 5, 1964; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer, 24.

[29] Philip Hope-Wallace, "From the Archive, 30 June 1964: Entertaining Mr Sloane," *The Guardian Online,* Monday 30 June, 2014.

[30] B. A. Young, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane," *Financial Times* [London, England] 1 July 1964: 26. *Financial Times*. Web. http://0-find.galegroup.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/ftha/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=FTHA&userGroupName=colorado&tabID=T003&docPage=article&docId=HS2303171527&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

suffered through the Lord Chamberlain's censorship, the critics could all happily agree that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, with its beautiful and simultaneously artificial dialogue, was a success. The effect was to portray blatant homosexuality in front of London theatre goers. The play's comical surface made it and other questionable topics safe for audience consumption. Even though homosexuality might have been freed from its forbidden status by the office of the Lord Chamberlain, its status in society continued to provoke serious controversy. Looking more closely at critical responses to the homosexuality in the play helps illuminate homosexuality's position further.

Theatre critics have the unique ability of expressing in the press their exact thoughts in newspapers about what they have seen onstage. In opposition to journalistic reporting, critics are deliberately encouraged to convey their opinions. In many initial reviews, critics defined Ed's character within the common trope of the predatory homosexual. For *The Times*, Peter Vaughan, who played Ed, was an "unmistakable and heavily played man hunter" who "happens to be a homosexual."[31] *The Financial Times* characterized Ed as "a sinister but almost virginal queer," while having "a shifty look and a predatory nose." [32] Darlington was unable to mention anything more than a passing phrase about homosexual relations, saying that Sloane "exercises a ghastly attraction over the younger Kemps, [both] brother and sister."[33] Hobson called Ed a "deformed and powerful pervert."[34] But the glowing review from *The Sunday* Telegraph by Brien went the furthest. While extoling Vaughan's performance, he referred to Ed as the "epicene brother" who is "a boy's paper caricature of a young tycoon, he embodies all the sinister ambiguities of the

[31] "Hard to Define Triangle," *The Times*, 20.
[32] Higgins, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane," *Financial Times*.
[33] Darlington, "A Revolting Lodger's Sway." *Daily Telegraph*.
[34] Hobson, "Touch of Orderliness," 33.

play with his timid bravado, his smirking sensuality and his gloating possessiveness."[35] Finally, it was B. A. Young whose moralizing praise was most succinct when he wrote that "in every department Evil is allowed to triumph."[36] Ed's actions in the play open up an opportunity for the critics to blatantly express their attitudes toward homosexuality. "Sinister," "predatory," and "deformed pervert," were all familiar ways of referring to homosexuality and men who expressed same-sex desire. While it's possible that Ed's hostile treatment at the hands of the critics was because of Vaughan's onstage acting choices, it is just as possible that their handling of the character was because of an inherent intolerance toward what he represented. It was simply characteristic of a dominant society and culture that equated homosexuality with evil, immorality, and disease.

Sloane's character escaped some of the scathing comments from the critics but not all. But given his status as an accidental murderer, it is difficult to point to his sexuality being the cause for their agitation. The spectrum of remarks he garnered ranged from matter-of-fact statements to playing on his vagabond lifestyle. He was "a belated and delinquent adolescent… prepared for anything that gives him money and comfort."[37] Described as "a tousle-headed twenty-year-old orphan with a winning smile," some critics struggled to pen Sloane's seemingly amorphous shape.[38] Unsurprisingly Darlington saw him as "nastiness personified,"[39] while Hobson described Dudley Sutton's performance as "just too coolly quiet to be natural."[40] It was Brien who came closest to reading the amorphous sexuality of the boy saying that he was "an ambisextrous gigolo and muscleman whose baby bottom face manages to seem both featureless

[35] Brien, "Guilt in the Age of Innocence," 14.
[36] Young, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane," *Financial Times*.
[37] "Hard to Define Triangle," *The Times*, 20.
[38] Higgins, "Entertaining Mr. Sloane," *Financial Times*.
[39] Darlington, "A Revolting Lodger's Sway." *Daily Telegraph*.
[40] Hobson, "Touch of Orderliness," 33.

and corrupt." [41] In the play's initial reviews, Sloane's nonchalant sexual fluidity paled in comparison to his amoral behavior and depravity. By the time the show moved to the West End, Hope-Wallace had opined that Sloane had "a head full of 'Bubbles' and the heart of a psychopath."[42] Living as a vagabond, being sexually fluid, and having a propensity for violence constitute "a *mentally ill person* who is highly irresponsible and antisocial and also violent or aggressive"(emphasis added).[43] Making Sloane into someone mentally ill cast him into a category that confined his behavior to something safe and explainable. This sterilization of both Sloane and Ed by critics helped depotentiate any original intent the author may have had. Anesthetization and sterilization of the show and its characters into purely comedic form is epitomized in the final critical response to the initial production of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane.*The success of the play brought about its publication by Penguin Books in 1965. The *New English Dramatist* series introduced to wider readership up-and-coming literary figures, and the new edition with *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* featured an introduction by the critic John Russell Taylor.

> The comedy of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, [Joe Orton's] first play, is undeniably of the type known as 'black', though whether the term is very happily applied in this case remains arguable. For what emanates from the play above all is a vast and all-embracing amiability; far from being meant really to shock us out of our lethargy, our normal, routine, uncritical responses to life, it works insidiously round our prejudices and preconceptions, building its comedy so easily and agreeably out of materials which we would usually think disagreeable and quite unsuited to comic treatment that by the time we escape from the dramatist's influence and start examining more coolly what we have been seeing we are likely to be amazed at what we have accepted with hardly a second thought[…] I think that all Mr Orton has set out to do is to provide an evening's light comic entertainment; I don't imagine that behind his play there is any vision of the world and its ways fighting for expression." [44]

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[41] Brien, "Guilt in the Age of Innocence," 14.
[42] Hope-Wallace, "From the Archive," *The Guardian Online.*
[43] "psychopath, n.". *OED Online*. March 2017. Oxford University Press.
[44] John Russell Taylor, "Introduction," *New English Dramatists 8,* (London: Penguin Books, 1965), 11-12.

Taylor further separated Orton's work from any potential objectives he might have had. To say that there was no "vision of the world" behind the play was to deny the realities of gay men living in a time of criminalization, especially if the play admittedly "works *insidiously* round our prejudices and preconception." In his introduction, Taylor spoke of Sloane and Ed in almost a reversal of the previous critics. Ed was now "a stolid businessman homosexual with a taste for body-builders who drops in from time to time," and instead it was "the smooth-skinned, fair-haired, Mr Sloane" who was "more than a little sinister" but still "possibly psychopathic."[45]. Taylor finished by saying:

> Theatre, living theatre, needs the good commercial dramatist just as much as the original artist, for without the one the other is unlikely to get his chance in the first place. Joe Orton is the first dramatist to write a solid, well-managed commercial play which belongs specifically and unmistakably to the 1960s; and that in itself entitles him to quite a sizable salute.[46]

Taylor's final remark was undoubtedly meant to compliment Orton, but instead it upset him. In fact, Taylor's response to the play was the first and only critical response that offended Orton. Orton was so upset about being made into a solely a commercial dramatist that he wrote a letter to his agent asking that the play be removed from the book.

> *Hamlet* was written by a commercial dramatist. So was *Volpone* and *The School for Scandal* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Cherry Orchard* and *Our Betters.* Two ex-commercial successes of the last thirty years are about to be revived by our non-commercial theatre: *A Cuckoo in the Nest* and *Hay Fever*. *Thark* is also mooted. I've no ambition to bolster up the commercial theatre, but if my plays go on the West End I don't expect this to be used as a sneer by people who judge artistic success by commercial failure. There is no intrinsic merit in a flop…[47]

Despite Orton's outrage, the play was still published and included Taylor's introduction. But Taylor's reduction of his work was egregious for the author. Orton later continued to vent

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[45] Taylor, "Introduction," 12.
[46] Taylor, "Introduction," 13.
[47] Letter from Orton to Peggy Ramsay, October 17, 1964. from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*.

his anger saying, "there are good plays and bad plays. With *Sloane*– people were always saying 'Oh it's just a commercial play.' It infuriated me because it wasn't; there isn't such a thing. It was a good play or a bad play."[48] Stating such non-intention poses the question: What exactly were Orton's motives there behind *Sloane*? None of the critics allowed for any meaning behind *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* other than an evening of (dark) light comedic entertainment. They were unable to confront the play as an exposition on sexuality, morality, and the language of their contemporary society. But did Orton intend to provide nothing more than laughs? Or was there something more to the play and what the artist was trying to say?

[48] Interview with Giles Gordon, "Joe Orton," *Transatlantic Review*, no. 24 (Spring 1967), 4.

3. Joe's Intentions

> The nation's morals are like teeth: the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them.
> –George Bernard Shaw, Introduction to *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*

Joe Orton had originally written the play to end after the killing of Kemp in Act II, an ending that didn't seem naturalistic enough to him after reexamination. "The new ending to *Mr. Sloane* is very simple, but a natural outcome," Orton said in an interview in 1964, "This is how I always work: letting a situation emerge and develop gradually, without a preconceived plan– letting the characters take over." [1] Orton needed to resolve the relationships between Sloane and the two siblings. By doing so, Orton declared open rebellion against established roles, behaviors, and depictions of sexuality. Orton later recounted that "What I wanted to do in *Sloane* was break down all the sexual compartments that people have."[2] By playing on the stereotypes and inverting their behavior or their depictions, by keeping the audience guessing, Orton tried to work against the status quo. But translating his efforts onto the stage was more difficult than he had imagined.

Orton grew frustrated at the actors 'compartmentalizing' their characters as the production of the play continued. He felt that Kath had become the nympho, Ed the queer, and Sloane the psycho all "because it's very difficult to persuade directors and actors to do what you want."[3] He understood that "people will put things into compartments" and that doing so made them safe. Orton observed individuals' and society's attempts to confine sexuality to particular behaviors and mannerisms. Depictions of homosexuality on-stage adhered to dominant diseased stereotypes either because playwrights couldn't imagine alternatives or producers were afraid of

[1] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism,* 391.
[2] Quoted but unsourced from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 155.
[3] Quoted but unsourced from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 155-6.

provoking the ire of the Lord Chamberlain and his reviewers. Despite the withdrawal of the absolute ban on homosexuality on stage by the office of the Lord Chamberlain, on stage depictions in London theatre relied on effeminacy to show men as either the pitiful victims of sickness or dangerous incarnations of sinful evil. [4] The challenge of antagonizing a society that saw itself as "enlightened" was one Orton understood when he said that "the only field still heavily unexplored is the sexual one."[5] At a time when certain forms of sexual behavior were literally policed by authorities, Orton was up to the challenge of confronting the stereotypes and compartments that contributed to such persecution.

Orton was emphatic that his characters' homosexuality appear as a practical outcome. Orton wanted Ed to be as conventional a man as possible saying that "in *Sloan*, I wrote a man who was interested in having sex with boys. I wanted him played as if he was the most ordinary man in the world, and not as if the moment you wanted sex with boys, you had to put on earrings and scent."[6] He wanted Ed's sexuality to be seen as a result of a sensible choice. A far cry from the prevailing attitudes about homosexuality, it actually reflected Orton's own experiences with his sexuality. Orton saw himself as turning away from women because of the amount of work involved in dating them. Though his rational attitude reflected the numerous times he had been rejected and stood up by women. He thought that the rigmarole he dealt with in heterosexual courtship came with little reward.[7] "[Ed is] sexually quite capable with women, and highly potent. That's why he so positively dislikes women: only a man who's had experience with women can dislike them. The adorers of women tend to be *impotent*: the priests of the mother

[4] de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience,* 90, 94.
[5] Joe Orton, quoted in Peter Burton, "I'm Not a Political Animal Says Joe Orton," *The Stage,* October 6, 1966, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 154.
[6] Gordon, "Joe Orton," 4.
[7] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 62-3.

goddess were always eunuchs. But Ed's hatred isn't violent or vitriolic, he's had the sense simply to see the obvious alternative."[8] Orton even went so far as to write to the American director of *Mr. Sloane,* telling him that Ed shouldn't wear a pinkie ring because "queers have been doing that for years."[9] Orton was interested in making Ed as practical and principled as any regular English businessman. He understood that in order to exact any self-examination from his audience, he needed to put them, and their way of life, on display. Despite Orton's revolt against typical homosexual representations, critics nevertheless perceived homosexuality in Ed, albeit as "sinister" and "predatory." But in relation to the machinations behind Ed, Orton's intentions with Sloane were otherworldly. Sloane was Orton's main assault against traditional English life.

Orton wrote Sloane's character as a shadow of his own life, a sexy hyperbolic fantasy of himself projected onstage. To create a caricature of himself, Orton cast his attitude toward social hypocrisy, cultivated during a prison stint, into his sense of youthfulness. "I originally saw [Sloane] as physically rather small and stocky,"[10] he said, recalling his own physical proportions. It wasn't just Orton's size but also his dress that he cast into Sloane. Orton often affected the same National Assistance look as Sloane, with a white t-shirt, jeans, and highlights of leather. Sloane's amoral approach to life was appropriate given that "the whole world and the whole human situation is comic and farcical."[11] Orton created Sloane not only to be amoral, but also to have the innocence of youth. He said in an interview that "[w]hat many people have found difficult to understand about Sloane is his combination of innocence and amorality. The English always tend to equate innocence with ignorance, which is non-sense."[12] The image of innocence

[8] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism,* 391.
[9] Orton to Alan Schneider, 14 September, 1965, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 157.
[10] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism,* 391.
[11] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism*, 392.
[12] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism*, 391.

was Orton's response to a capricious society from which he felt displaced. Orton wrote into Sloane his life circumstances and his homosexuality, although in an embellished form. Sloane was "Orton's shadow, a projection by which he becomes the free conscienceless subverter of morality, the begetter of sexual anarchy," as one modern critic wrote.[13] Innocent yet amoral, in a world bent on policing homosexuality, "Sloane's shamelessness, which made taboos meaningless, was [Orton's] revenge on society."[14] With sex as his currency and a simple lackadaisical approach to life, Sloane was Orton's sexual rebellion, uninhibited by normative beliefs, in full swing. Orton's contemporary critics missed or lacked language to explain these signifiers as anything other than "total evil."

This mismatching between Orton's intentions and the initial critical reception of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was symptomatic of the incongruities Orton experienced living as a homosexual in England in the 1950s and 60s. His life served as a model for the play and *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* became his response to a repressive reality. His story was not unlike that of many homosexuals who grew up at that time, while his standpoint seemed quite extraordinary. It was his radical approach not only to male homosexuality, but sexuality in general, that was Orton's response to a 'One-Dimensional' reality.

[13] de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience*, 99.
[14] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 147.

4. Joe Orton

GERALDINE. I lived in a normal family. I had no love for my father.
– Joe Orton, *What the Butler Saw*

Born January 1, 1933 in Leicester, England, John Kingsley Orton signified a new consciousness of homosexuality. It was the success of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* that generated his meteoric rise to notoriety and helped secure his success as an English playwright. However, success was not something with which Orton was familiar. Nor did he grow up with the experience of any of success's trappings of financial security or social refinement. Growing up in the Saffron Lane Estates in Leicester, England, a town of textile industries, John was the first of three siblings in a working class family with a volatile mother and a loving, but distant father.

John's early life was impoverished but not bleak. His mother, Elsie Orton, considered him special and he strove to live up to her dreams.[1] When he failed the tests for entrance to grammar school his mother enrolled him in a private college. Unfortunately for John, the school's focus was geared toward commercial skills rather than academic learning. His early diaries demonstrate a clear distaste for work but also a desire to improve and mold himself into something successful.[2] While trying to live up to his mother's expectations, John felt trapped in a mediocre and drab life that he longed to escape. He read fantastic books like *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, and Bulfinch's *Mythology*. John Orton knew he had struck something special when he discovered acting. He joined no less than three local theatre companies in pursuit of preforming. "Hope that I am allowed to let my imagination run riot" he wrote in 1950 about a production of *The Tempest* he was rehearsing. With an uncanny ability to show up late for his regular work, that usually resulted in being fired, John demonstrated little enthusiasm for

[1] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 49.
[2] Recorded in Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears* 40, 53.

a spent doing office work.[3] The theatre presented opportunities to escape his family and their dreary existence. After learning there were scholarships and local grants available to attend the prestigious Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) in London, he began taking elocution lessons to rid himself of his Mid-lands accent.[4] John Orton traveled to London on his 17th birthday to audition for RADA and was accepted. Unfortunately, a bout of appendicitis kept him from beginning immediately. John Orton left Leicester in May, 1951, determined to make a name for himself.

Shortly after moving to London, John met his soon to be partner, confidant, and lover, Kenneth Halliwell. Both were attending RADA, and it was in this theatrical setting that Halliwell took Orton under his wing. The two became lovers as much as writing partners with each influencing the other. Their relationship benefited from Joe's youthfulness and Kenneth's refinement, each partner providing an alternative perspective for the other. The pair of men also found in each other someone they could depend on.[5] They both grew up with a feeling of isolation and discovered relief in their relationship. While Orton always felt like an orphan growing up, Halliwell actually was. At age eleven Halliwell watched his mother suffocate from a wasp sting in the mouth. Then at twenty-three he woke up to find has father asphyxiated, his head in their gas oven.[6] Halliwell had moved to London to pursue acting after finding decent success in regional theatre.[7]

Orton moved into Halliwell's apartment in West Hampstead with two other RADA students. One of their flat mates, Lawrence Griffin, recalled that Joe seemed to go along with

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[3] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 65-6.
[4] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 68-72.
[5] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 68-97-8.
[6] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 68-91.
[7] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 68-92.

Kenneth's affections because of the material conveniences they brought. But he also admitted that "[Joe] must have liked Kenneth Halliwell. He'd do anything Kenneth wanted him to."[8] At the onset of their relationship Halliwell was the one to provide for the couple.[9] Their lives outside RADA were funded by Halliwell's inheritance from his father. After school, both failed to gain meaningful employment as actors and started to see their future in writing. Orton learned of the rich classical literary world from his well-educated partner as the two set out to publish something informed yet avant-garde.[10] The two moved into a newly-purchased flat in Islington, London and survived on a strict budget in order to preserve Halliwell's inheritance. They began their writing venture with Halliwell dictating and Orton typing and offering suggestions. Halliwell was familiar with the classical and literary world and was eager to impress his knowledge and knowhow on his companion. Orton was attracted to the material security and worldliness of Halliwell, and the two bound their lives together the more they worked.

The writing partners submitted manuscripts for publication as early as 1955. But the pieces were always rejected as either too abstruse or as "Rather good, really, but not good enough."[11] The two started submitting works separately in 1957. Lahr describes the process as Joe leaving behind "Halliwell's baroque for a more direct, concrete, and colloquial style."[12] Despite this change in tactics, both writers continued to face rejection from the literary world. Perhaps out of frustration, or perhaps in pursuit of a creative outlet that might lead to notoriety, Orton and Halliwell began stealing and defacing library books in 1959.[13] Caught, tried, and

[8] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 102.
[9] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 103.
[10] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 103.
[11] Written on a submission letter for *The Mechanical Womb* in 1955 by Charles Monteith of Faber & Faber, a London Publishing Company. *The Mechanical Womb* was the first manuscript Orton and Halliwell submitted for publication. As recorded in Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears,* 108.
[12] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 112.
[13] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 84.

jailed for 6 months by civil authorities in 1962.[14] Orton later commented privately that their sentence was overly harsh "because [they] were queers."[15] But this prison term proved transformative for John Orton and for his writing.

Isolation, reflection and separation from Halliwell seemed instrumental in enabling Orton to find his own creative voice. His "creative energies were unleashed" as Susan Rusinko puts it in her literary treatment of Orton.[16] For whatever reason, prison seemed to mature Orton's perspective. Approximately a month after the opening of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, Orton recounted his artistic transformation for his hometown paper. "I tried writing before I went into the nick… but it was no good. Being in the nick brought detachment to my writing. I wasn't involved anymore And it suddenly worked."[17] Prison gave Orton "the revelation of what really lies underneath our industrialized society."[18] Later while the show was still running on the West End, Orton went even further. "Before prison, I had been vaguely conscious of something rotten somewhere: prison crystallized this. The old whore society really lifted up her skirts and the stench was pretty foul."[19] Before prison, John Kingsley Orton had surrendered to a modest material existence in an effort to improve his writing abilities. Afterwards Joe Orton was determined to provide a mirror to what he saw as the amoral and caustic British social reality. He not only meant to show it its most hypocritical parts but also to break it apart. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was Orton's first commercially successful attempt at his comical approach to reality. Orton dedicated *Mr. Sloane* "to Kenneth Halliwell."[20] His dedication reflected the partnership he

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[14] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 80.
[15] Rupert Croft-Cooke, *The Cave of Hercules,* (London: W. H. Allen, 1974) 82, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 86.
[16] Susan Rusinko, *Joe Orton*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995) 4.
[17] Quoted in the Leicester *Mercury*, June, 4 1964. from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 126-7.
[18] Quoted in the Leicester *Mercury,* from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears,* 126-7.
[19] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism* 391.
[20] Orton, "Sloane," Complete Plays, 63.

still depended on in many ways. But in a reversal of how they had begun their writing venture, Orton was now the primary writer with Halliwell offering suggestions and edits. Orton knew that he owed a measure of his success to his partner and remained emotionally faithful.

Joe's success put a great deal of stress and strain on the relationship between the couple. Halliwell wanted a domesticated life with Orton and sought to keep himself attached to a man he feared would leave. Orton reveled in sexually rebellious promiscuity that Halliwell struggled to relate to. Orton related his promiscuity to his creative ability saying to Halliwell, "Look, I've got to do it. I've got to be the fly on the wall!"[21] As Orton saw it, the political chaos he transposed into his plays depended on his sexual anarchy.[22] Regardless of his sexual appetites, Orton expressed a devotion to Halliwell that their friend, comedian Kenneth Williams, recorded in his diary on July 23, 1967:

> Went to see Joe Orton and Kenneth. Both were so kind. We talked a lot about homosexuality and the effect the new clause would have (the Humphry Berkely Bill not Leo Abse.[23]) We all agreed it would accomplish very little, that it was the climate of opinion that really counted more.
>
> Joe walked me all the way to King's Cross. I remonstrated with him, "No, it's not fair. You must go back to Ken. He's on his own." He said it didn't matter. The he said, I'll never leave him."
>
> We talked about his inability to love and his horror of involvement, He said, "I need to be utterly free." In the flat K. Halliwell had disagreed with this saying that love was involvement and you cannot live without love.[24]

Whereas the relationship between Halliwell and Orton started in mutual companionship, tutelage, and possibly love, over time it morphed into one of familial piety, convenience, and,

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[21] Quoted in Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 28.

[22] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 28-9.

[23] The "bill" was a House commons version of Lord Arran's bill in the House of Lords. The bill sought to decriminalize homosexual acts between adults while fixing the age of consent to 21. After a second reading of the bill in the Commons in 1966, Berkely lost his seat in the general election. Leo Abse sponsored a similar bill that eventually became law.

[24] Uncited entry to Kenneth Williams' diary, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears,* 27.

tragically, destruction. Both Halliwell and Orton's lives were cut brutally short. Victim of a tragic murder-suicide, Orton's senseless end had all the dark elements of his stage plays without the comedic twist. The reality of being murdered by a suicidal partner was the appalling finale of a rebelliously homosexual Orton and his mockery of British life. Killed by his partner, Kenneth Halliwell, Joe Orton's career and life was shaped by the man who ended him. The pair had lived and worked together at a time of criminalized homosexuality. They died together on August 9, 1967, just thirteen days after the Sexual Offences Act 1967 received royal assent, decriminalizing homosexual acts between men in private at or above the age of twenty-one.

5. Homosexuality in Mid-Twentieth Century London

> Had there been a lunatic asylum in the suburbs of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ would infallibly have been shut up in it at the outset of his public career. That interview with Satan on the pinnacle of the Temple would alone have damned him, and everything that happened after could but have confirmed the diagnosis.
>
> –Havelock Ellis, *Impressions and Comments*, series 3

"Homosexuals, in general, are exhibitionists and proselytizers and a danger to others, especially the young. As long as I hold the Office of Home Secretary I shall give no countenance to the view that they should not be prevented from being such a danger."[1] Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe, the Tory Home Secretary in Winston Churchill's postwar government, delivered this statement in 1954 to the House of Commons. Sir Maxwell-Fyfe's statement represented the 'issue' of homosexuality in mid-twentieth century England. British authorities considered homosexuality to be a danger to public morality and a threat to society. This opinion grew from the conflation of a moralistic religious view of homosexual behavior and the mid-nineteenth century socio-scientific movements to pathologize and criminalize deviations from sexual and social norms.

The secular treatment of homosexual behavior in England began during the reign of King Henry VIII. Sodomy was explicitly outlawed in the 1533 Buggery Act stating, "For the detestable and abominable Vice of Buggery committed with Mankind or Beast… the offenders being hereof convicted by verdict confession or outlawry shall suffer such pains of death…"[2] Authorities tried and convicted men for homosexual behavior by that legal standard for more than three hundred years. The law caused all non-reproductive sex to be clustered into a single

[1] Recorded in Weeks, *Coming Out*, 159.

[2] Great Britain, The Statutes as Large, of England and of Great Britain: From Magna Carta to the Union of the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, (London: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1811), Accessed December 17, 2016, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101075729275;view=1up;seq=187

legal category and carried a Christian moral framework into the secular world. Despite the law, enforcement was uneven and sporadic. The most consistent application of the law coincided with when the British Empire was at war. In the armed forces, sodomy charges were equated to the level of mutiny, treason, and desertion.[3]

In 1861, English lawmakers repealed the death penalty set by King Henry VIII and replaced it with life imprisonment with the *Offences Against the Person Act.* [4] Then, twenty-four years later, legislators made more changes to the law in order to prevent the corruption of youth and to protect the moral fabric of society. Social-purity campaigns of the 1880s linked homosexuality and prostitution under the umbrella of the destructive forces of male desire. The need to control such forces was linked to three main ideas: one, promoting of the "progress of civilization[…] in the direction of purity," two, recasting both childhood and adolescence as devoid of sexuality, and three, a growing collective fear of English imperial decline.[5]

In the name of stamping out male lust, the *Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885* outlawed all homosexual activity and certain practices of prostitution. This legal amendment was an attempt to enforce a set of social standards through fear of retribution. [6] Originally geared toward regulating prostitution and raising the age of consent for girls, a last minute clause was added by the M.P. Henry Labouchére. It stated:

> Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of or procures (a) or attempts (b) to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency (c) with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor,

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[3] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 13.

[4] Great Britain, *Offences Against the Person Act 1861,* Section 61, Accessed December 17, 2016. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/24-25/100/enacted

[5] Jeffrey Weeks, "The Construction of Homosexuality," *Sex Politics and Society Second Edition*, (London: Longman Group, 1989), 106-7.

[6] Weeks, *Coming Out,* 13-8.

> and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.[7]

Consequently, the Labouchére amendment made any sexual act between two men (not just sodomy), public or private, illegal and much easier to prosecute. Previous to this amendment, the onus was on the prosecution to prove non-coital penetration had actually occurred, a task that was difficult for numerous reasons. The first was that medical examiners lacked the knowledge or understanding to identify sodomitical intercourse.[8] The need for social authorities to create legal definitions of homosexuality spawned the impetus to create a medicalized understanding of deviations from non-reproductive sexual intercourse.[9] With newly minted knowledges of homosexual behavior, authorities had grounds for legal enforcement of the norm.[10]

The efforts to enforce social norms, aided by a growing popular press, culminated ten years later with the spectacular trials of the Labouchére amendment's most famous victim: Oscar Wilde.[11] Wilde was charged, convicted, and sentenced to two-years hard labor for 'gross indecency' in 1895. While his sensational downfall was in part due to hubris, in the end Wilde was victim of the promotion of Victorian moral righteousness and efforts to prevent society's decline.[12]

Simultaneous to these social movements and the changes in law was the growing medical and anthropologic approach to both human sexuality and criminology. Assessing and parsing out

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[7] Great Britain, *Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885*, Section 1, Accessed December 17, 2016. https://archive.org/details/criminallawamen00bodkgoog

[8] Weeks, "The Construction of Homosexuality," 101.

[9] Weeks, "The Construction of Homosexuality," 104-5.

[10] See also Michel Foucault, "The Perverse Implantation," *History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Chapter 2, (New York: Random House, 1990), 36-49.

[11] Weeks, *Coming Out,* 21.

[12] H. G. Cocks, "Secrets, Crimes and Diseases: 1800-1914," in *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men Since the Middle Ages*, ed. Matt Cook (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007), 134-44.

the specificities of the conglomerate of actions that fell under 'sodomy' was the task of medical and legal professionals in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Early medical work came from Dr. Johann Ludwig Casper in Germany and Dr. Ambroise Tardieu in France for the explicit reason of discovering physical characteristics that would set homosexual men apart and establish their culpability.[13] It was Dr. Casper who identified the division between 'acquired' vs 'innate' characteristics that would shape the two popular camps of thought for over a century.[14] The work of the Austrian Professor of Psychiatry Richard von Krafft-Ebing demonstrated a progressive evolution of thinking about homosexuality. In the earliest editions of his *Psychopathia Sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing views homosexuality as a degenerative, pathological state but by the twelfth edition he accepted that an individual's homosexuality was the result of a combination of both congenital and acquired characteristics giving more importance to the congenital conditions: "with tainted individuals the… latent perverse sexuality is developed under the influence if neurasthenia induced by masturbation, abstinence and otherwise."[15]

The knowledge of homosexuality was growing thanks to the nineteenth-century contributions by psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, medical doctors, criminologists, sexologists, and homosexuals themselves. These new found 'experts' sought to establish a body of knowledge on the sexuality of humans. Krafft-Ebing and a German lawyer, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, both saw homosexuality as the result of a child's genitals and mind developing into opposite genders. The result was an 'invert,' someone with the mind of a woman in the body of a man. The problem with a congenital view was that it questioned justifications to punish homosexual behavior.[16] How could authorities hold individuals liable if their 'condition' was no fault of their own? The

[13] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 27-8.
[14] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 26.
[15] R. Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis,* (London, 1892), 228 from Weeks, *Coming Out*, 26.
[16] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 26-7.

Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, defined individuals with homosexuality as atavistic. He argued that born perverts shouldn't be punished in prisons, but rather their insanity should be treated in asylums.[17] While both Ulrichs and Lombroso saw homosexuality as innate, Ulrichs defended that homosexuals were not dangers to society, nor were they insane. Conflicting views on homosexuality's latent qualities continued to plague social scientists well into the twentieth-century. Was the condition a result of defective genes from one's parents as the Russian sexologist Veniamin Tarnovsky argued?[18] Was it activated or brought on by repeatedly engaging in sodomitical behavior or exposure to other environmental factors? Though these questions and congenital ideas were popularized on the European continent throughout the nineteenth-century, it took longer for such ideas to find consequential reception in Britain.

Both Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter published on homosexuality in England around the turn of the century in their respective works: *Sexual Inversion* and *The Intermediate Sex.*[19] But their ideas of a genetic relationship to sexual deviation fell to an unenthusiastic and moralistic medical and professional audience.[20] Though their respective works were aimed at psychological and sociological experts, the books became a resource for men seeking validation of their same sex desires.[21] It was not until another sensational trial, half a century after Wilde's, that such congenital attitudes toward homosexuality found traction in a wider British social consciousness.

The public outcry at prosecution and convictions of Lord Montagu, Peter Wildeblood, and Michael Pitt-Rivers in 1954, prompted by the press coverage around the trial, proved

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[17] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 27.
[18] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 27.
[19] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 29.
[20] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 29-30.
[21] Cook, "Queer Conflicts," 160.

demonstrative of a divide in the public's views on homosexuality in the mid-twentieth century. The controversy was exemplified by the editorial "Law and Hypocrisy*"* that ran in the *Sunday Times* following the convictions. Calling for an inquiry, the paper's editors wrote:

> Homosexuality is rich pasture for the blackmailer; for the social stigma and the legal penalty of disclosure are alike terrifying to the wretched invert who, perhaps by a single reckless deed, has given way in secret to his warped desires ...One may well ask whether, in regard to consenting acts between adult males, the truth is not that the real offence is to be found out… Notorious inverts occupy eminent places… In all this matter our society is riddled with hypocrisy. The law it would seem is not in accord with a large mass of public opinion… The case for a reform of the law as to acts committed in private between adults is very strong… the case for an authoritative inquiry into it is overwhelming.[22]

The idea of an innate homosexual nature that grew alongside ideas of criminality from the 19th century eventually succeeded in crafting a space for greater public sympathy. Additional public reaction to the convictions forced the post-WWII government to reconsider the homosexual 'issue' and its relation to the law. The state commissioned an investigation on "the issue of homosexuality." The Wolfenden Committee, named after the committee chair and then Vice Chancellor of the University of Reading, John Wolfenden, was comprised of fifteen 'experts': lawyers, doctors, high-court judges, MPs and the chairwoman of the Scottish Association of Girl Guide Clubs.[23]

A seemingly unlikely ally, The Anglican Church played a crucial role in helping to influence the Wolfenden Committee. *The Problem of Homosexuality,* a report produced by the Church Information Board, recommended a decriminalization of homosexual acts committed in

[22] Editorial, "Law and Hypocrisy," *Sunday Times* (London, England), March 28, 1954, quoted in Matthew Waites, "United Kingdom: Confronting Criminal Histories and Theorising Decriminalisation as Citizenship and Governmentality," in *Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in The Commonwealth: Struggles for Decriminalisation and Change*, ed. Corinne Lennox and Matthew Waites, (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013), 152.

[23] Cook, "Queer Conflicts," 172.

private in the same year as the Committee was formed.[24] In a review of church documents, Historian Matthew Grimley argues that this was a result of senior Anglican Church member's desires to separate sin from crime. He identifies two reasons behind the shift: one, the general tendency to demarcate a private sphere that was safe from the dangers of totalitarianism, and two, a desire to avoid secular intervention in Church matters as it experienced in the Prayer Book Crisis of 1927-28.[25] Though it would be incorrect to paint support for this change as universal, The Church did recommend to the Wolfenden Committee that "it is not the function of the state and the law to constitute themselves the guardians of private morality, and that to deal with *sin as such* belongs to the province of the Church."[26] Taking this counsel seriously, the committee turned its attention to understanding what homosexuality was, where it came from, and its particular threats.

The 'disease' model was taken up by the Woflenden Committee as it sought to bring the law into accord with homosexual 'offences.' For the Committee, the pathological issue was characterized by the conflicting evidentiary reports of the 'pervert' versus the 'invert.' The former personified an individual who made perverse choices while the latter was an inherent condition making the victim less liable for his actions.[27] While the Committee refrained from passing judgement on "controversial and scientific problems," they concluded that, in response to the evidence they had seen, homosexuality was not a disease *qua* disease.[28] Instead they saw

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[24] Matthew Grimley, "Law, Morality and Secularisation: The Church of England and the Wolfenden Report, 1954-1967," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History,* Vol. 60, no. 4 (October 2009): 726. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022046908005952.

[25] Grimley, "Law, Morality and Secularisation," 730-731.

[26] Sherwin Bailey (ed). Sexual offenders and social punishment: being the evidence submitted on behalf of the Church of England Moral Welfare Council to the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution, with other material relating thereto, London 1956, 36, quoted in Grimley, "Law, Morality and Secularisation," 726.

[27] *The Wolfenden Report*, 35.

[28] *The Wolfenden Report*, 33.

homosexuality as an inherent condition or state of being that "cannot come within the purview of the law."[29] Harkening to the church's advice, the official report stated that "unless a deliberate attempt be made by society through the agency of the law to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private that is in brief, not the law's business."[30] In 1957 The Wolfenden Report was essentially questioning the role of secular law and its power in public versus private spaces. Based on their view that homosexuality was a private matter, to be dealt with by the afflicted individual, but that left untreated homosexuality could still be a danger to others, it recommended "that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private be no longer a criminal offence. That questions relating to 'consent" and "in private" be decided by the same criteria as apply in the case of heterosexual acts between adults. That the age of "adulthood" for the purposes of the proposed change in the law be fixed as twenty-one."[31] Despite the recommendations of the committee, the Tory government was far more concerned with preserving the *status quo* than in attempting to push the public on progressive social issues. It wasn't until the election of a Labor government in 1964 that the horizon for legal change opened.[32]

The 1960s were a "golden age of liberal-humanitarian reforms" as one historian puts it.[33] The growing economic prosperity of European cities in the post war decades marked the period as one where "puritan moral codes began to crumble."[34] Social reform and ideas about individual liberty, aided by growing affluence, started to push back against puritanical morality. With a progressive agenda in mind and with many of the political issues of poverty and

[29] *The Wolfenden Report*, 27.
[30] *The Wolfenden Report*, 24.
[31] *The Wolfenden Report*, 187.
[32] Cook, "Queer Conflicts," 175.
[33] Weeks, Coming Out, 173.
[34] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 173.

inequality no longer pressing, left-wing British politicians seized on ‘personal issues’ as the only real space for substantial change.[35]

The passage into law of the *Sexual Offence Act 1967* is often recollected as a turning point of LGBT rights in Britain. Homosexual acts were decriminalized in private for persons over the age of twenty-one. Despite this change to the law, its effects were minimal to the reality of living as a homosexual in London or Britain. When commenting on the passage of the law, the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins encapsulated the acceptance of a pathological stance on homosexuality saying "those who suffer from this disability carry a great weight of shame all their lives.”[36] In fact, the total number of recorded homosexual crimes showed no changes and prosecutions actually increased.[37, 38] It seems as though homosexuals were doomed to live their lives as societal flotsam, drifting about and subject to the whims of the dominant society.

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[35] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 174.

[36] "A Night of Talk and Homosexual Reform Is Passed." *Times* (London, England, July, 5 1967) 13. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. http://0-find.galegroup.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=colorado&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS218590437&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0

[37] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 176.

[38] United Kingdom, *Historical Crime Data*, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/historical-crime-data

6. The Loss of Thinking and Art's Potential

> A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization…
>
> –Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional-Man*

Herbert Marcuse, the political and social philosopher, was just as critical of modern society as Joe Orton. *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse's polemic against advanced industrial civilization, was published in 1964, the same year *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was first produced. In the book, Marcuse discusses the collapse of reality into a single expression. That is, in every stratum of the human experience he saw long standing tensions between opposing forces being eliminated. The arcades of existence Marcuse saw collapsing were political discourse, the arts, communication, language, and philosophy. These various sites historically potentiated change by maintaining antagonistic forces, whose opposition contributed to a historical dialectical process that would lead to freedom. But because of the advanced technological reality, a technological rationality negated the inherently antagonistic forces of reality and the fallout was the loss of an ability to think critically. Marcuse's theories on society reflect a world that was increasingly capable of meeting people's basic needs through technological advancement. He said that advancing technological reality, instead of being used to liberate people from the tyranny of existence, enabled a continuation of the status quo: the need to submit oneself to oppressive and exploitive work in order to sustain one's existence. Despite an advanced technological state that could meet individuals' basic needs, Marcuse believed that civilization continued to function oppressively. The reason advanced industrial civilization is able to continue its domination is that a corresponding technological rationality posited the advancing technological reality as its justification for itself. That is, Marcuse believed that the dominating system perpetuated itself by propagating the idea that civilization's goal was to continually seek greater technological

advancement. Individuals accept instrumental thinking as rational because of advanced technology society's ability to meet their needs. This presented a serious problem for Marcuse, who saw the impulses for rejecting the dominating system being eliminated, thus negating the true historical alternatives for freedom. The acceptance of technological rationality convinced Marcuse that the struggle for revolution had to be begin in people's thinking. He argued that one of the few opportunities left for cultivating resistant ways of thinking was avant-garde art. But by appropriating the avant-garde's work and proliferating it throughout society, advanced industrial civilization negates art's stimulating effects. Marcuse also gestured toward the marginal folds of society as a potential source of society's negation. Ultimately, though, Marcuse believed that in order to achieve real freedom individuals had to regain an ability to think critically.

Marcuse believed that the greatest achievement of advanced industrial civilization was the triumph of originally critical ideas. Freedom of thought, speech, conscience and enterprise served as oppositional concepts to an old historical reality. Marcuse saw that the realization of these concepts invalidated their critical function in societies.[1] He believed that because of technological advancements, advanced industrial civilization had negated traditional class divides. The proletariat or working classes, on whom Marx's revolution relied, was being subsumed (*aufgehoben*).[2] As Marcuse saw it, in a post WWII and Cold War reality, there was no longer the traditional struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. Because society was not composed of two separate mass identities with opposing rationales, but represented a pluralism of individuals united under a single rationality, the traditional basis for revolution was negated. Marcuse recognized that the dominant system of class struggle was no longer a material one. The

[1] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 1.

[2] 'Aufgehoben' in German has no real equivalent English idea. It can be translated no less than twenty-six different ways. It can mean to cancel and annul, but also to lift up and absorb. I invoke it here to emphasize the "lifting up" and "canceling out" aspects of Marcuse's views.

alienation of man from his labor was no longer the source of misery that Marx once relied on to bring about the proletariat's realization of their servitude.

Technological Reality's Rationality

Modern industrial societies have grown in their ability to ameliorate the traditional material misery of the large working class. Technological advancements reached a point where all people's vital needs could be met. Marcuse points to the increasing amount of goods available to everyone as an indication of the flattening out of traditional class boundaries.

> If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the typist is as attractively made up as the daughter of her employer, if the Negro owns a Cadillac, if they all read the same newspaper, then this assimilation indicates not the disappearance of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population.[3]

This fulfillment of people's 'needs' made people unaware of their dependency on the system. Analogous to the advanced industrial system's distribution of goods is its distribution of false needs. "Needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate,"[4] are all reproduced by the system itself. By setting up these false needs and then producing the goods to fulfill those needs, the rationality of advanced industrial society is reinforced. Civilization's ability to "deliver the goods" is one of its most invasive systems of control.

Individuals willingly submit themselves to this system of control because they have accepted its rationality. Advanced industrial society is seen as the only way to reduce suffering because of this implantation of false needs. Individuals desire to work for and re-produce the

[3] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 8.
[4] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 5.

advanced industrial system because in doing so, they contribute to their own material improvement. This is the nature of the modern domination of man: to live and submit himself to a world that communicates the need to do so by implementing itself as the end goal. The technological rationality reduces possibilities and freedoms through continual-perpetuation that is actually a result of each individual's (unconscious) choice to believe in it. The devious nature of this reality is its delegitimizing of alternatives through social control such as publicity and marketing, logical thinking, and the distribution of false needs.

For Marcuse, the struggle against domination must take place on the mental plane because the conditions of the advanced industrial society are happily accepted by individuals (in order to maintain their happy consciousness). The technological efficiency of the system, however, makes any thought or idea that challenges its rationality irrational. One-dimensional thinking is reciprocally reinforced by a technological system that not only meets the vital human needs, but that also appears to improve the human condition beyond them. The appearance of lacking a need for alternatives to the system serves to negate their possibility. Society's ability to "reduce, and even absorb [its] opposition" is supported by its ability to ameliorate the harsh conditions of existence. "The result," Marcuse says, "is the atrophy of the mental organs for grasping the contradictions and the alternatives and, in the one remaining dimension of technological rationality, the *Happy Consciouseness* comes to prevail."[5] Thinking itself becomes atrophied and is replaced by the system's technological rationality.

The system's technological efficiency leads individuals to accept the system. Servitude to the advanced industrial society is accepted because the system provides the means for individuals to maintain a "*Happy Consciousness*." The result is a reciprocally recursive

[5] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 79.

production of a technological rationality and an elimination of "historical alternatives." Anything that opposes the system must be irrational. "It reflects the belief that the real is rational, and that the established system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods."[6] Rather than the technological reality giving birth to a revolution from the pursuit of vital needs, *both* technological reality and the pursuit of vital needs are instead adopted by the technological rationality. The new technological rationality reinforces its inevitable perpetuation because of the 'objective' truth that advanced industrial society can provide an end to human suffering.

Freedom and the Importance of Thinking

Advanced industrial societies have gained control of our lives, not only in the world that we see, touch, taste, smell, and hear, but within our inner mental realities as well. The advanced industrial program has encompassed not only our external lives but also our private and inner-most thoughts. This conquering of the human psyche is discussed above. In a later book, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (1978), Marcuse emphasized that a decision for revolution must be made subjectively and by individuals. He opposed the classical Marxist idea that subjectivity was a bourgeois value. Marcuse said that an inner-mental realm renders revolution as possible because subjectivity enables in individual to view material reality from a distance. Subjectivity is a mental function that "calls on truth," and with its affirmation "the individual steps out of the network of exchange relationships and exchange values, withdraws from the reality of bourgeois society, and enters another dimension of existence."[7] This process, he said, actually altered the manner in which individuals were historically recognized, shifting personhood from the material driven "performance principle and profit motive to that of the inner resource of the human being:

[6] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 79.
[7] Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, (Boston, Beacon Press: 1978), 4.

passion, imagination, conscience."[8] In other words, he says that the artistic dialectic of sublimation/desublimation during the Enlightenment created a new basis for an individual recognition of 'the self.' The creation of this mental space constitutes a second history of a person. While the "actual manifestations [of their history] are determined by their class situation," this inward historical narrative still constitutes a second real reality.[9] It is from this aesthetically created subjectivity that individuals were able to recognize their domination by an oppressive system of labor.

It is the dissonance between the subjective reality and the material reality that establishes the grounds for a revolutionary consciousness. This consciousness is shared most obviously by oppressed and marginalized people. By observing what is given in the outside reality and then comparing it to one's own personal 'inward' reality, people can recognize the incongruities. This theory is consistent with historical revolutions for Marcuse. Because the proletariat, as a materially oppressed class of individuals, was able to recognize the dissonance between the promoted ideals of beauty and love and the reality of their material conditions, they had the ability to consider alternatives. By recognizing the dissimilarities between these two realities, Marcuse believed that political and social revolution could become viable alternatives once more. The necessity for such revolutions remained an important truth for Marcuse. He said that the old forms of freedom were only appropriate given their (old) opposing conditions. The people living in an advanced state of industrial civilization now required new forms of freedoms *from* their advanced industrial civilization.

For Marcuse, true freedom is freedom from *all* forms of social domination. People's unfreedom is masked in supposed liberal freedoms, such as the freedom of choice: the freedom

[8] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 5.
[9] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 5

to choose a brand of toothpaste, to choose between candidates from two parties, and (apparently) the freedom to think one's own thoughts. But Marcuse proposed that these are illusions of freedom. Real freedom would be freedom *from* the economy, freedom *from* politics, and freedom *from* the systems of mass communication and indoctrination that create 'public opinion.'[10] He argues that these new forms of freedom are already technologically viable and could be realized by centralizing the distribution of goods. Marcuse thought that efforts to reject such a prospect of centralization "in the name of a liberal democracy which is denied in reality [only] serves as an ideological prop for repressive interests."[11] In the case of Western Europe and America, technological rationality's mobilization of liberal democratic values is a defense tactic. The repressive nature of technological rationality is evidenced by its ability to insulate itself from alternatives.

The technological reality is such that the advanced industrial civilization is now capable of mass production and distribution on an unprecedented scale through automation. Societies' technological capabilities enable them to ameliorate the basic needs of every individual. The satisfaction of the vital "–nourishment, clothing, [and] lodging at the attainable level of culture" are a precondition for the fulfilment of *all* needs.[12] But advanced industrial society entraps those vital needs in the unfreedoms of the economy, politics, and indoctrinated thought while also administering false needs. The challenge that Marcuse saw was the impossibility for people to recognize for themselves alternatives to the dominant system or its rationale. He understood that real political and social change needed to be preceded by a struggle to change one's own thoughts. He drove this point home saying that "self-determination will be real to the extent to

[10] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 4.
[11] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 257.
[12] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 5.

which the masses have been dissolved into individuals liberated from all propaganda, indoctrination, and manipulations, capable of knowing and comprehending the facts and of evaluating the alternatives."[13] Without the ability to imagine alternatives to the given reality there is little chance of answering Marcuse's question: "How can the administered individuals—who have made their mutilation into their own liberties and satisfactions, and thus reproduce it on an enlarged scale—liberate themselves from themselves as well as from their masters?"[14] It would seem that people must find a way to reintroduce critical thinking in order to recognize their own domination. Marcuse was not particularly optimistic that citizens of advanced industrial societies could find some means of reopening an internal world of reflection. Such a second-dimensionality would, at least, create new possibilities for considering alternatives to the given reality. At most, it could create a spark to ignite revolution.

Art[15]

Marcuse believed that art can open up an alternative reality, a second-dimension. Art's ability to incite two-dimensional thinking grounds his position that avant-garde art has revolutionary tendencies. Marcuse acknowledged the narrow, technical sense of 'revolutionary' art, saying that art's transcendence of itself in style or new artistic choices in form can be considered "technically" revolutionary. Such a definition, however, failed to say anything "about the quality of the work, nothing about its authenticity and truth."[16] His focus was instead on how

[13] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 252.
[14] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 250-1.
[15] Marcuse defines art somewhat broadly and in his monograph refers mostly to works of literature. Though theatrical art also works its way into Marcuse's writing, he did not limit his theories to these artistic forms. He spoke to this in the preface of *The Aesthetic Dimension.* "I do not feel qualified to talk about music and the visual arts," he wrote, "thought I believe that what holds true for literature, *mutatis mutandis*, may also apply these arts."
[16] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, x-xi.

art takes the given reality and inverts it, i.e. presents it in an entirely new way. Art is revolutionary for Marcuse when "by virtue of its transformation, it represents[…] the prevailing unfreedom and the rebelling forces, thus breaking through the mystified (and petrified) social reality, and opening the horizon of change (liberation)."[17] This inversion, or *artistic sublimation*, establishes an entirely separate dimension. A second reality creates a space where people, nature, things, and society can be considered outside the realm of the everyday reality. Marcuse incorporates the "prevailing realities" of advanced industrial civilization into the classical Marxist aesthetic theories in his monograph *The Aesthetic Dimension*.

Art is the material manifestation that creates a second reality separate from the prevailing logic of the dominant society. His main thesis is:

> The radical qualities of art, that is to say, its indictment of the established reality and its invocation of the established reality and its invocation of the beautiful image (*schöner Schein*) of liberation are grounded precisely in the dimensions where art *transcends* its social determination and emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse and behavior while preserving its overwhelming presence.[18]

For Marcuse, this aesthetic method creates a second dimension that can instigate critical thinking. This second dimension provides a viewer with an ability to recognize their subjugation by a dominant system of control.[19] This happened because through the processes of *artistic sublimation*, real reality is both present and negated in the work of art. Marcuse's definition of *artistic sublimation* is:

> Under the law of the aesthetic form, the given reality is necessarily *sublimated*: the immediate content is stylized, the "data" are reshaped and reordered in accordance with the demands of the art form, which requires that even the representation of death and

[17] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, xi.
[18] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 6.
[19] I employ the term "viewer" to signify individuals who interact with an artistic work. Because of the various forms art may take, rather than only refer to people looking at a piece of artwork, "viewer" refers to individuals watching, experiencing, listening, reading, *and* viewing art.

> destruction invoke the need for hope—a need rooted in the new consciousness embodied in the work of art (emphasis added).[20]

The given reality is *sublimated* and shaped by the aesthetic form to create its own separate reality. *Artistic sublimation* is a process where the artist takes the given reality he is presented with and transmogrifies it into a new reality. This separate, artistic reality contrasts with the prevailing sensibilities and rationality of the given society. Because this process transcends the dominant society, it breaks apart the truths that are held to be objective and gives birth to a "rebellious subjectivity."[21] Individual viewers, exposed to this contrary, second-dimension are afforded a new perspective by way of their "feelings, judgements, [and] thoughts."[22] From the vantage point of this newly accessed dimension of reality, the viewer's universal inner-dimension of the universal truths, is *artistically desublimated*, resulting in a negation "of dominant norms, needs, and values."[23] That is, by relating their own universal humanity to the universals *sublimated* in the artwork, the viewer's universal truths *desublimate* to contrast and call out the inherent inequalities and inequities in real reality. This *artistic sublimation/desublimation* dialectic resolves itself in experiencing reality as it really is and represents the ideal relationship between individuals and art. This relationship is blocked and negated by technological rationality and *repressive desublimation.*

The ideal dialectical process of *artistic sublimation/desublimation* works to both affirm the dominant reality as well as negate it. When reality is subjected to the aesthetic form, it is re-presented and constitutes the transformation into art. The particulars of the story or style of presentation are not a factor for Marcuse's aesthetic theories. The piece of artistic work does not

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[20] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 7.
[21] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 7.
[22] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 8.
[23] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 7-8.

need to tell the story of the proletariat to be revolutionary, nor does the work need to follow a particular pattern or be of a certain type. Rather, Marcuse's emphasis is on the transformation of the content of the given reality into a new *sublimated* artistic form that then requires a level of reflection to perceive. This new artistic re-presentation mediates the given reality with an alternative possible one.

A transformation or re-presentation of the given reality provides the artist with a new space to depict universal human conditions by inscribing them into the circumstances of a protagonist or main characters of a story. Marcuse defines the universals of the human experience as Eros and Thanatos, life/joy and death/tragedy.[24] These forces also represent the dialectic resolution of freedom toward which all of art reaches. By incorporating these universals into the events that surround the main characters and into the characters themselves, their depictions transcend the presented reality of their narrative. By identifying themselves with a character's narrative, viewers are provided with both a reality outside their immediate material existence and exposure to universal truths within that alternate artistic reality. This alternate reality, with its own truths, is a representation of the real reality of the universal human condition. A viewer's ability to perceive the *artistically sublimated* universal truths constitutes the process of *artistic desublimation*. Once the viewer contemplates this alternative, true, and universal reality presented in aesthetic form, their consciousness has a new ability to recognize the untruth of the given reality. That is, these new modes of perception give a viewer the ability to recognize alternatives to their given reality because their own universal truths have been *desublimated* and liberated by the work of art. This new mode of perception is a cognitive ability

[24] Marcuse's universals were heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud. Eros and Thanatos represent the life (libido) and death drives that Freud believed were constantly in conflict and fundamental to the human experience.

that is formulated when a viewer must meditate on a work of art. It is the separateness yet sameness of art that provides for the liberation of the viewer's universal truths while also indicting the given rationality with all its management and control. This is an invoking of the given material reality while simultaneously negating it.

Art's Transformation into Entertainment in Advanced Industrial Civilization

In Marcuse's advanced industrial societies, technological rationality employs a *repressive desublimation* and disrupts the original dialectical aesthetic process. This disruption results in blocking art's ability to invoke universal truths and the viewer's ability to recognize their domination. In addition to technological rationality's defensive tactic of repressive *desublimation,* technological reality liquidates art's power of negation through commodification. In Marcuse's account, advanced industrial societies are systematic in deploying these tactics to refute non-operational ideas and appropriate new means of satisfying false needs.

Technological rationality's ability to block the dialectic of aesthetics stems from advanced industrial society's technological achievements. The inherent tension of the actual and the possible is being closed by the advancing technological reality. Art's originally disruptive figures are pathologized, which results in "the psychiatrist tak[ing] care of the Don Juans, Romeos, Hamlets, Fausts, as he takes care of Oedipus—he cures them."[25] By carrying forth a technological rationality in experiencing art, viewers no longer find the universals of the human experience, but instead find stories and scenarios in which they can recognize the advancing technological reality. This is the process of *repressive desublimation*: a viewer contemplates an artistic work and instead of recognizing a true and universal reality presented in aesthetic form,

[25] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 71.

their consciousness mirrors only the truths of the given reality. This is due in part to engaging with art differently than in the past. For rather than connecting with a true universal experience, viewers seek comfort and excitement to satisfy their false needs. *Repressive desublimation* fosters one-dimensionality. Technological rationality first blocks recognition of the universal qualities of Eros and Thanatos, and then replaces them with cognitive reinforcements of the given, repressive reality. When a viewer engages with art their technological rationality is *desublimated* into the aesthetic realm, and just as it reinforces itself in reality, so it does in the aesthetic reality. Technological reality's reciprocal reinforcement of itself is equally effective in all realms of experience. That is what made Marcuse so pessimistic about the advancing technological state. In technological reality, protagonists are written for consumption and art becomes nothing more than entertainment to satisfy consumer's needs to maintain their "*Happy Consciousness*." True to systemic form, this is not advanced industrial civilization's only method for negating the "Great Refusal."

Marcuse says that the great works "are deprived of their antagonistic force, of the estrangement which was the very dimension of their truth[…] If they once stood in contradiction to the status quo, this contradiction is now flattened out."[26] In other words, the stories and depictions in art no longer maintain a separateness from reality. While the technological rationality mobilizes itself in various realms of existence, technological reality is working in conjunction to eliminate long standing tensions that once required *sublimation.* Great works are commodified, mass produced, and readily available at the corner store and consumers of mass culture listen to the great classical composers as background music while they shop to satisfy their false needs.[27] By reducing what was once "high culture" to pop-culture, and disseminating

[26] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 64.
[27] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 64.

it on a wide scale, advanced technological reality prompts a mass *desublimation* causing the old forms of universal truths to be negated. In addition to the aesthetic realm the traditional *sublimated* methods for engaging in pleasure, in the erotic, are being similarly *desublimated.* This form of *repressive desublimation* is a result of "the Pleasure Principle absorb[ing] the Reality Principle [and] sexuality is liberated (or rather liberalized)."[28, 29] The increases in the material conditions from the technological reality provides parallel increases in an individual's ability to pursue their sexual pleasures. Through *repressive desublimation,* this absorption essentially de-eroticizes and negates an additional realm of reality and limits yet another space for recognizing subjugation to a dominant system.

The Avant-garde's efforts to reclaim the aesthetic dialectic and recreate "an estrangement which would make the artistic truth again communicable" represent a glimmer of hope for Marcuse.[30] He notes that such efforts on behalf of the avant-garde have historically "rejected the very structure of discourse, which throughout the history of culture, has linked artistic and ordinary language."[31] By deploying breaks in the language of art, the avant-garde manages to re-create a distance between the viewer and their works of art. This distance is what gives the viewer an opportunity to re-start thinking critically. But ultimately, Marcuse remains pessimistic. The prevailing realities make the work of the avant-garde equally susceptible to commodification. It seems that all forms of art cannot resist being appropriated by society to

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[28] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 72.

[29] The Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle reflect another facet of Freud's thinking that deeply influences Marcuse. Briefly, the Pleasure Principle is the realm of the libido or life drive. The Reality Principle represents an individual's ability to recognized acceptable and unacceptable forms of pleasure in reality and society. This causes an individual to *sublimate* their libido into socially acceptable forms. Note that Marcuse uses the terms sublimation/desublimation and *artistic sublimation/artistic desublimation* and well as *repressive sublimation.* I have made a concerted effort to clarify and separate these terms and their meanings for my reader.

[30] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 66.

[31] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 68.

fulfill false needs, thus becoming nothing more than entertainment. The truth of the avant-garde's work is easily refuted by a technological rationality because advanced industrial society continues to alleviate the suffering of existence.

I believe, however, that there remain potentials for breakthroughs and rejecting this new one-dimensionality. For Marcuse, the material or social situation of the artist need not matter. This is because the truth of the aesthetic dimension is represented within the work itself. "The criteria for the progressive character of art are given only in the work itself as a whole: *in what it says and how it says it*"[32](emphasis added). The truth in the works created by an artist who belongs to the elite class is not negated because they do not have firsthand experience of a proletariat existence. This is because the truth expressed in art is the universal human experience of Eros and Thanatos sublimated into the characters in the work of art itself. While Marcuse's theory does not depend on an artist's class or social position, he does not dismiss outright the possibility of social differences creating aesthetic possibilities. In fact, Marcuse gestures to "the substratum of outcasts and outsiders," saying that because "their life is the most immediate and the most real need [*sic*] for ending intolerable conditions and institutions… their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not."[33] So while an artist's ability to *artistically sublimate* reality may not depend on an artist's social position**,** it *can* help foster an awareness of the 'intolerable conditions and institutions.'

Marcuse's position provides that if a work of art achieves a second dimension, the artist needs to already have some level of consciousness of the discrepancies between universal truths and the given reality. Art does not spontaneously create itself, especially avant-garde art. An artist with enough awareness of the universal human condition must have some sense of the

[32] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 19.
[33] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man,* 256.

distance between life's incongruences and the given reality. In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Marcuse quotes Nietzsche's seminal work *The Will to Power,* "The price of being an artist is to experience that which all non-artists call form, as content, as "the real thing" (*die Sache selbst*). Then however one belongs to an inverted world; because now the content, our own life included, becomes something merely formal."[34] That is to say that the immediate un-meditated data of existence for most people is what makes up their view of reality. For artists, however, that level of existence is negated because they experience the essences of life, the macrocosm, Eros and Thanatos as the immediate experience. But Nietzsche adds that such an existence makes an artist's life appear to them as simply ceremonial. For Marcuse, artists have an epistemic advantage, or at least difference, that comes from experiencing universal truths in the ordinary.

Artists from the perimeter of society may have an advantage in perceiving the essences of life, but whether or not they are allowed to experience them is another. I contend that exclusion from the benefits of society provides for an ability to perceive society's truths and cultivates fertile ground for fostering an indictment of society. In *One-Dimensional Man* Marcuse says that those alienated from society exist in opposition to the dominant forces. "Their opposition hits the system from without and is therefore not deflected by the system; it is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game."[35] Marcuse makes a point about these groups being able to legitimately challenge dominant society. When this legitimate challenge is combined with an artist's skill of *artistic sublimation,* a powerful aesthetic negation of society can result. Specifically, Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* represented this combination of an attack from outside and Orton's ability to transcribe the real

[34] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht,* (Stuutgart: Kröner, 1930), 552, from Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 41-2.
[35] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 257.

reality into his art. The play was the *artistic sublimation* of a revolutionary consciousness and it was his aim to incite a true *artistic desublimation* from his audience.

7. Entertaining Two-Dimensional Homosexuality

> There is no question that the appearance in the nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and "psychic hermaphrodism" made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of "perversity"; but it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.
>
> –Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. I*

Entertaining Mr. Sloane was a fantastic reality for Orton. By translating what he saw when "the old whore society really lifted up her skirts" into his play, Orton believed he could "break up all the sexual compartments." In his view, social propriety covered up a morality that was as hollow as the language that supported it. Orton's sexuality automatically placed him on the outside of the norm, a position that first isolated him and then provided a basis for him to exploit. In a sense, the technological rationality of Marcuse's advanced industrial civilization was employed to create Orton's 'perversity' and negate him from society. Orton's two-dimensional existence evolved out of a need to navigate within as well as outside the dominant society seeking to control his homosexual behavior. This double life provided the fodder for Orton's conscious attempts to confront the dominant society. He was conscious of art's classical ability to mediate between the "real" and the ideal, and he took his role as an avant-garde artist seriously. By transcribing his life experiences into aesthetic form, Orton created avant-garde art that negated society.

Orton attacked British society's preposterous social norms with tools readily at his disposal: sex, language, and amorality. Sex and sexuality underscore the entire play as an indictment of British society's promotion of sexual restraint. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, Orton

liberated sexuality in all its forms to expose the truth he saw operating in everyday reality. Orton weaponized his dialogue by molding colloquial speech to construct his characters' permissive realities. This deployment of language by Orton's characters creates the conditions for amorality to triumph in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. Orton's deconstruction of morality when it impinges on his character's freedom points to society's fabricated morals. Essentially Orton was "naming the 'things that are absent' [and] breaking the spell of the things that are."[1] These elements of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* combine to perform the alienating task for art that Marcuse lays out.[2]

Over the course of the play, the actions of Ed and Kath are oppositional to their use of the popular language that signifies their propriety. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* negated society by deploying ordinary, everyday language to obfuscate actions that were extra-ordinary. Ed and Kath claim principled moralities that are exposed as veneers for their driving impulses: sexual fulfillment. Sloane reintroduces sex to the lives of the siblings and panders to their lustful desires. The confrontation between Sloane and Kemp is the contest between two moral realities, with the old regime being sacrificed in order to give way to the new. The depiction of the amoral act of murder without apology or any submission to authorities is an indictment of a dominant society that prided itself on its sense of equity and justice. Orton resolves the play by highlighting his characters' enslavement to their desires as well as their desires' absolution. Both Eros and Thanatos triumph in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, satisfying Marcuse's aesthetic equation to create an indictment of the social norm. Sloane is both freed from facing Justice but also sentenced to a life of sexual service to the siblings. Kemp has been destroyed, freeing the way for Ed and Kath to live pleasurable lives without guilt. And while the siblings appear unscathed, they must split the source of their sexual satisfaction and surrender to their amorality.

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[1] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 68.
[2] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 62-71.

Sex

> One writes out of one thing only–one's own experience. Everything depends on how relentlessly one forces from this experience the last drop, sweet or bitter, it can possibly give. This is the only real concern of the artist, to recreate out of the disorder of life that order which is art.
>
> –James Baldwin, *Collected Essays* "Autobiographical notes"

Sex and sexuality were Orton's natural tools of resistance. If we accept Foucault's theory on the modern advent of sexuality as social control, its culmination is observable in the efforts to suppress, control, manage, and treat homosexuality in mid-twentieth century England. Society had oppressed Orton as homosexual, and society was who he was after. Much of Orton's life recorded in his diaries reveals that his existence revolved around sex. Is it any wonder that it became a tool to turn back against the society that rejected him? Sloane's fluid sexuality, modeled after Orton's, was the first step in creating a sublimated reality. Pliable and amorphous, Sloane isn't restrained by any conventional ideas of sex or propriety and is an embodiment of a revolutionary sexual freedom.

The opening of the play has Kath and Sloane bargaining sexual favors for food and shelter. The earliest talk of homosexuality in the play is a direct reference to the criminal law forbidding men from committing "gross indecency." "Then one day, shortly after his seventeenth birthday, I had cause to return home unexpected and found him committing some kind of felony in the bedroom," Kemp told Sloane about discovering Ed with another man.[3] Making Ed seventeen at the time of his 'felony' was a criticism aimed at the Wolfenden Report's suggestion that twenty-one be the age of consent for a decriminalization. Sloane, himself under twenty-one, provides opportunities for one confrontation after another. Both Kath and Ed are driven by their

[3] Orton, "Entertaining*," Complete Plays,* 71.

sexualities and pursue the virile Sloane. Kath's liberal sexuality is bound up in a maternal need for love and is displayed through her crude actions. In contrast, Ed's homosexual desire is eroticized and communicated through insinuation. Orton placed Marcuse's repressively desublimated and traditionally sublimated Pleasure Principles in contradistinction with each other. Kath's overt sexuality is "liberalized" and desublimated, while Ed's still operates within the erotic or "the tension between that which is desired and that which is permitted."[4] Ed and Sloane's homosexual tension is sublimated and mediated through eroticism and innuendo, such as when Sloane's orphanage years and sporting endeavors fuel Ed's desire (Ed is literally puffing away at his cigarettes). Marcuse was critical of the absorption of the Pleasure Principle by the Reality Principle in *One-Dimensional Man*, but his account could not apply to homosexuals. Dominant society *required* that homosexuals operate in a sublimated eroticism. The juxtaposition of these two sexual realities, one desublimated and the other sublimated, enhanced the on-stage tensions that Orton employed.

Orton's sexual escapades in a world of oppression required him to operate in a world of innuendo. He understood the power of allusions and employed them easily. When Sloane recounts his athletic accomplishments for Ed, the older man's lust nearly puts him into a sexual fit. Ed's interest in Sloane, as well as Sloane's willing participation in the erotic exchange, is clear enough to a 21st century reader familiar with erotic gay imagery. In 1964 however, while audiences may have found the exchanges humorous, some may have struggled to identify the underlying meaning. Orton refused to provide further representative fodder for what he saw as safe, compartmentalized, effeminate portrayals. "I think that the portrait of the queer in Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy* is very funny, but it's an awfully conventional portrait," Orton said in an

[4] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 72-4.

interview from 1967, "It's compartmentalisation again. Audiences love it, of course, because they're safe. But one shouldn't pander to audiences."[5] Recall that Orton wanted Ed "played as if he was the most ordinary man in the world," as if trying to prove the banality of homosexuality in a stigmatized world.

Orton's depictions of homosexuality weren't as blatant as two men embracing on stage. Such an action was expressly forbidden, even after the secret memorandum lifting the absolute ban on homosexuality.[6] Though interestingly the same missive also states that "We would not allow any 'funny' innuendos or jokes on the subject."[7] Perhaps it was that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was a complete departure from previous portrayals of homosexuality, or that its references simply paled in comparison with the rest of the sexual antics. Orton recalled that "the funny thing about the Lord Chamberlain was that he cut out all the heterosexual bits and kept in all the homosexual bits."[8] For whatever reason, all references to homosexuality remained intact and free of censorship upon the play's transference to the West End. [9]

The lack of attention to such details might have been influenced by the succession of Chamberlain Scarborough by Lord Cobbold, in 1963. Cobbold had an "awareness of public toleration" on taboo subjects and was fully cognizant of the declining ability of his Office to stand against the theatre world.[10] Calls to abolish censorship altogether, and a growing progressive labor movement probably helped contribute to a more permissive attitude emanating

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[5] Gordon, "Joe Orton," 4.

[6] Lord Chamberlain's 'secret' memorandum. Printed in Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,* plate 18.

[7] Lord Chamberlain's 'secret' memorandum. Printed in Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,* plate 18.

[8] Quoted in an interview with Barry Hanson, Royal Court programme for *Crimes of Passion*, 6-17 June, 1976, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears: The Biography of Joe Orton,* 159.

[9] Shin, "Entertaining the Lord Chamberlain," 51-2.

[10] Shellard, Nicholson, and Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets,* 162-73.

from the Office of the Lord Chamberlain. The likely reality, however, was that the Lord Chamberlain's reader, John Johnston, was unable to grasp such a revolutionary approach to homosexuality and was simply in over his head.[11]

Orton emphasized the rationality of homosexuality. Women were something that men naturally grew out of for Orton. "Only a man who's had experience with women can dislike them," he said. This approach was a direct challenge to the long campaign for the acceptance of a pathological and biological reality of homosexuality. Orton took the original predatory tropes that motivated laws criminalizing homosexuality and reinforced them in contradistinction with the changing attitudes that resulted in pity. These caricaturizations were the older, wealthy gay man and the young, pliable opportunist. The perceived dangers were that the older pederast risked infecting the youth with his deviant ways, resulting in a degeneration, while the young opportunist could subject the older partner to blackmail and extortion by threatening to expose his deviance. The main point was that these men made an active decision to engage in such activity, and thus could be punished for their choice. The campaign to reform the law was based in the helplessness of the born and afflicted homosexual who required pity and understanding. Orton's refutation of prevailing attitudes went beyond an unapologetic onstage portrayal of homosexuality. Not only did he invoke subconscious prejudice and fears to create re-presentations of homosexuality onstage, but he also turned the traditional tropes on their head. In the end of the play it is the young opportunist Sloane being blackmailed rather than the older wealthy gay man. In order to "smash the compartments" of his audience, Orton inverted any element of society he could fit into his play. Orton's deployment of sexuality in his art was a novel approach, but one that was inspired by his own experiences.

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[11] de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience,* 102.

John Lahr asserts that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was the most "autobiographical work" of the late writer.[12] And in fact, Lahr's biography on Joe, published in 1978, remains the authority when considering Orton's life. Carrying with the autobiographical theme, Lahr believes that Orton split his own sexuality between Ed and Sloane. I disagree and instead believe that the onstage pair was far more a reflection of Halliwell and Orton's relationship than Orton splitting himself between two characters. Orton was clearly thinking of himself when he spoke of Sloane, so why not draw the analogy out and see the resulting relationship based on Halliwell and Orton? Ed, like Halliwell, was a safe haven for a young Orton, providing structure and reassurance to the budding actor and developing playwright. Sloane's proclamation of his choice at the end of Act II, "Not you! I want Ed!"[13] aligns with the beginning of Orton's relationship with Kenneth. But it wasn't just the sexual and working relationship that Joe was committed to honoring. Remember that it was Kenneth's inheritance that helped to finance the two's excursions while they were at RADA.[14] Those funds, along with the sale of Kenneth's previous flat in West Hamstead, allowed them to purchase the apartment in Islington. The stability Halliwell offered Joe went beyond just a romantic or sexual fling; there was a deep devotion and gratitude Orton felt for the man he was with. It such a light, the play's dedication, "To Kenneth" gains greater significance than a passing gesture toward Halliwell as the "housewife" as Lahr describes. And yet such an approach still fits within the autobiographical conclusion the biographer draws.

Both Kath and Kemp also share in reflecting Joe's life. Kath's malicious treatment at the hands of Ed and Sloane belies strong feelings toward the opposite sex for Orton. In Act II, both Ed and Sloane are overly aggressive with Kath. Sloane's behavior swings between sadistically

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[12] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 157-8.
[13] Orton, "Sloane," Complete Plays, 127.
[14] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 102.

playing with a toy and pragmatically surrendering to his hostess' attentions. In contrast, Ed's treatment of his sister seems resentful and turns into overt cruelty. Kath's character allowed Orton to confront a morality that normalized heterosexual and familial propriety. But beyond being a punching bag for society, Kath maintained other connections to Orton's real life. Orton modeled Kath after one of the few women who had a lasting influence on his life. Mrs. Elsie M. Orton, Joe Orton's mother, with her volatility and dissatisfaction, served as the framework for Orton's creativity. Kath resembled Orton's mother so much that his sister, Leonie Barnett, recognized her in the 1975 Royal Court revival of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. "That's her! It's like seeing a ghost. She was always over dressing. Once she got dressed in gold lame and painted her shoes gold just to go to the pub. The paint cracked when she walked. There were gold flakes all the way to The City Arms."[15] Mrs. Orton's volatile behavior served as a basis for Orton's considerable wariness of women. When they rejected or failed to respond to his romantic gestures as an adolescent, Orton he recorded in his diary a negative attitude toward women in general.[16] Orton's low opinion of the female sex helps illuminate some of the gross misogyny Ed and Sloane display when dealing with Kath. Kath was a hyperbole of Orton's view on women and treated her with distain and disgust. Orton clearly relied on his life's experiences to write *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. It was his experiences and observations of reality that energized Orton's indictment of society. Such an adherence to his life, helped Orton's project to "nam[e] the 'things that are absent,' breaking the spell of the things that are."

Orton's relationship with Halliwell and Orton's mother being sublimated into the play weren't the only aspects of his life to be sublimated in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. Orton's father and childhood home also found their way into the authors work. Orton's childhood home sat next

[15] Quoted in Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 158.
[16] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 62.

to a canal that served as a drain for industrial waste just as Kath and Kemp's house sits on the edge of a dump.[17] Orton's father is inscribed into Kemp's character and plays an important role in the resolution of the play. Sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular infuse *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* with a marginalized reality in which Orton lived in. His peripheral perspective enabled him to use his life as a template for a polemic against society. Yet Orton's comedic abilities veiled his attack. The result was that some of the people he was most critical of were those who most wanted to see his play. He understood humor as his weapon and he wielded it mercilessly. In a reflection of his world, Orton crafted the language of his characters to cover up their desires.

The real reality of Orton's characters was the pervasive sex running through the entire play. Kath's lust, veiled with familial propriety, and Ed's homosexuality, lingering behind his principled persona, were on display for the public well before any sexual revolution or summer of love. Orton's effort represents a re-emergence of universal truths that he *artistically sublimated* into the play. Despite eighteenth and nineteenth century English efforts at control, humans are sexual beings. Orton parodied the attempts of people around him to hide their desires from themselves. Language, and its use in constructing justifications, was employed in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* in the same manner that Orton observed in his surroundings: every-day people wrapped themselves up for protection from the truths they refused to acknowledge.

Reality Building Language

> *Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*. (The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.)
> –Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922)

[17] Rusinko, *Joe Orton* 77.

Marcuse observed and was highly critical of analytic philosophy's efforts to "[orient] itself on the reified universe of discourse, and [expose] and [clarify] this discourse in terms of this reified universe."[18] He contends that this positivist project, led by Wittgenstein

> substitutes for the hated world of metaphysical ghosts, myths, legends, and illusions a world of conceptual or sensual scraps, or words and utterances which are then organized into a philosophy. And all this is not only legitimate, it is even correct, for it revels the extent to which non-operational ideas, aspirations, memories and images have become expendable, irrational, confusing, or meaningless.[19]

Note that Marcuse calls the project "correct" because it serves the interests of the technological rationality, not because it is true. This language then reinforces advanced industrial society's dominion by continuing to eliminate alternatives. The result of the analytic project is to remove the negative connotations of language. Marcuse concludes that without such tension in language, poetic and philosophic distinctions are "rejected, removed into the realm of fiction or mythology [and] a mutilated, false consciousness is set up as the true consciousness that decides on the meaning and expression of that which is."[20] Analytic philosophy presents a new flattened out and determinative language. Marcuse saw this as the loss of language's ability to be a tool of negation because the ambiguous meanings behind words are silenced.

Arguing against this deployment of positivist language, Marcuse contends that language has the inherent ability to reveal that which is hidden and disclose that which was intended to be hid. He says that within each word lies its universal meaning and that the universal in each thing demonstrates *both* that which it is and that which it is not.[21] This linguistic obfuscation became Orton's greatest tool. By using language drained of its meanings, Orton contrasted his

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[18] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 182.
[19] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 187.
[20] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 188.
[21] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 213.

characters' realities for the audience highlighting the dissonance. Simultaneously, Orton was indicting the hollowness of language by mirroring its everyday use.

Amidst the sexual frivolity in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, the language of Orton's characters is always at odds with their behavior. They deploy mundane expressions to describe the extraordinary. While removing Sloane's trousers in Act I, Kath pipes cheerily, "Don't be embarrassed, Mr. Sloane. I'd the upbringing a nun would envy and that's the truth. Until I was fifteen I was more familiar with Africa than my own body. That's why I'm so pliable." The statement is an open invitation for Sloane to acknowledge her sexual readiness, while dressing it in traditional morality. The comedy of the entire play is built on around such distinctions.

Lahr points out that "[b]y censoring language, Kath can make life 'safe.'"[22] But the language tools Kath employs were entirely new to the British stage. Orton incorporated advertising jargon, "the lusciousness of grade-B movies, [and] the bold face short hand of tabloid journalism" to infuse his work with the ready-made pop culture.[23] As Sir Terence Rattigan put it, "What Orton has to say about England and society had never been said before. The first thing it showed was a society diminished by telly-technology. Everybody expresses themselves as if they were brought up on television."[24] Orton saw the linguistic reality that Marcuse deplored and re-appropriated it. By taking "the language of [the] masters, benefactors, advertisers," Ed and Kath use Marcuse's one-dimensional linguistic reality that "achieve[s] no other empirical exactness than that exacted from the people by the given stage of affairs, and no other clarity than that which is permitted them in the state of affairs," to cover the actual reality lingering behind the

[22] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 161.
[23] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 154.
[24] Uncited quote from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 153.

rhetoric.[25] Kath actually believes in her propriety because it is provided to her by social authorities and commercial advertisements.

Kath's language is as much of a product of her reality as it functions to produce it at the same time. Her displaced quips and assimilated pop-culture phrases remove her from the actions happening around her and place her in a safe and 'proper' reality. Kath regularly expresses her happiness and affection for her constructed reality by showing appreciation and pride in her material objects. "This shepherdess is a lovely piece of chinawork. She comes up like new when I give her a wash," Kath says, "the crack spoils it though. I should have it mended professionally." When she discovers that 'Dadda' is dead, Kath's first concerns are for her material needs and her appearances, both of which enable her to satisfy her sexual desires. For Kath, reality is built around a fulfillment of her biological needs which are supported and hidden by the nomenclature produced by advanced industrial society.

The characters in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* aren't conscious that they smooth things over. Their constructed veneers are *valid* insofar as they believe in them, and they believe in them because those are the ideals provided them by the advanced industrial society. The use of 'adman' jargon punctuates whatever situation they find themselves in to explain away and dismiss indiscretions or imprudence. It is an avoidance mechanism to keep from experiencing uncomfortable feelings and situations. As Marcuse calls them "the 'improper,' 'queer,' 'absurd,' 'puzzling,' 'odd,' 'gabbling,' and 'gibbering' […] have to be removed [so that] sensible understanding [can] prevail" lest they "disturb the […] ordinary universe of discourse."[26] The constant repetition of advertising, by means of television and radio, provided people with witty quips and one-liners explicitly designed to address people's needs. How convenient that people

[25] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 193-4.
[26] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 193.

begin using such language in their everyday lives. This is the same one-dimensional language that Marcuse saw us falling into with words distilled of their meaning. These phenomena are also evidenced by the other side of the conversational equation, when those listening or responding demonstrate no sensitivity to the words or events. There is no meditation on the meaning behind situations. Meanings are wiped away for the conveniences of life. Feelings and sensitivities underneath situations are easily written off as irrational because they don't promote a "happy consciousness" and have been relegated to the realm of fiction and illusion. Orton's artistic genius was to contrast this hollow language with sexual and amoral actions. He forced the mediation between words and their meaning onto the audience to create laughter. By exposing a real reality underneath his characters' words he sought to reveal to his audience that their own everyday language was devoid of meaning. The distillation of language by analytic philosophy Marcuse describes in *One-Dimensional Man* was being disseminated into society. Orton responded by taking is up this hollowed out language and wielding it as his weapon to break up society.

Lahr points out that "Ed's rhetoric, like Kath's clichés, becomes a verbal cocoon that protects him from accurately perceiving himself."[27] Ed's principles represent his own construction of reality. Orton uses Ed's liberal principles to juxtaposes the character's homosexuality with society's pretense of inclusive and compromising mores. Again Orton forced his audience to mediate between their given reality's supposed veracity and Ed's ability to selectively adhere to its supporting ideals. Ed is faithful to his liberal principles so long as they serve to further his material comfort, and enable his pursuit of his homosexual desires. He quickly dismisses violence and covers it over with the pop-language of moral clichés. When

[27] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 162.

Sloane is violently 'convincing' Kath to agree to cover-up Kemp's murder, Ed states, "I'm annoyed with you, boy. Seriously annoyed. Giving us the benefit of your pauperism. Is this what we listen to the Week's Good Cause for?" Orton makes fodder of morality itself using "The Week's Good Cause," a weekly Sunday evening radio program that advocated giving to charity for the good of society. Even the liberal principles of British society were disseminated through the media into the public. Marcuse saw the distribution of such ideals as indicative of advanced industrial society suppressing alternatives by promulgating its own importance. This was no surprise for Orton, who again used such examples to further his critique of British (advanced industrial) society.

British novelist and literary critic Christopher Bigsby states that in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* Ed's "liberal principles become no more than a cover for a sexual assault."[28] Perhaps it is unsurprising that critics should continue to mark the older homosexual as a predator when Kath comes much closer to actually sexually assaulting Sloane. Sloane's willingness to participate in such exchanges is also seemingly forgotten. Contrary to Bigsby's opinion, Ed isn't a rapist but simply lives in a reality devoid of conventional morality. His makes use of principles to justify his pursuits. In the same way that Kath's motherly need for sexual fulfillment is covered and controlled by her media-supplied language, Ed's liberal principles have subsumed his desire for male companionship and mask it in an acceptable form. In this manner, Orton is employing and revealing reality as it is. He "call[s] men and things by their name" by "nam[ing] the otherwise unnamable."[29] Orton always emphasized *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*'s direct social reflections in his interviews. He wanted the public to understand he was writing about them and employing their own linguistic tactics against them.

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[28] C. W. E. Bigsby, *Joe Orton*, Contemporary Writers, (London; New York: Methuen, 1982), 30.
[29] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 247.

Marcuse says in "The Historical Commitment of Philosophy" that both things and words have an objective historical reality within them. This is a result of the combination of universal principles into particular objects and things. He says that we experience the world as constructed by universals, and these concepts are the "ground on which [particulars] arise, exist, and pass."[30] In fact, particulars are only recognized as particulars because they are contrasted to the universal web underlying them. Orton acknowledges this reality and deploys it in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. By emphasizing the antagonistic elements between language and reality Orton tried to show what was really there. His characters' words employ the universal element by negating that which is, and in doing so, help crystallize the real reality for his audience. The world of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is a particular experience that is only recognizable from the web of universals that construct reality outside the theatre.

(A)Morality

> God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?
>
> — Friedrich Nietzsche*, The Gay Science, Section 125*

Marcuse gives great importance to rationality and the power of reason. For him, the one-dimensional man is caught up in the technological rationality that is closing off multi-dimensional thinking. Marcuse says that morality (whether religious or secular) lacks an objectivity to the dominant scientific and technological ways of thinking, which makes them "not *real* and thus count less in the real business of life."[31] Because of their lack of objectivity, morals continue to act in the world as "factors of social cohesion." Marcuse says that as ideas they "are only 'ideal' [and] they don't disturb unduly the established way of life, and are not invalidated by the fact that they are contradicted by a behavior dictated by the daily necessities of business

[30] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man,* 211.
[31] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man,* 147.

and politics."[32] Marcuse's dismissal of morality to have objective reality is problematic when considering Orton and other homosexuals in 1950s and 60s London. During that time, English society sought to negate homosexuals because of lingering "factors of social cohesion." Advanced industrial society may have an inescapable rationale, but what if morals create social dissonance rather than cohesion? Such a conflict might disrupt a homogenizing rationality, especially if the morality is mobilized to justify social exclusion. A stigmatizing morality was at the root of Orton and other homosexual men's marginality. Recall that the rejection of homosexuals in the twentieth century was achieved through the technological progression of medicine and psychiatry. Also remember that the deployment of these technologically rational sciences was motivated by the desire for secular societies to enforce anti-sodomy laws that were infused with religious prejudice. If we take Marcuse's objective historical reality to be true, then the historically universal associations of homosexual: sodomite, invert, pervert, and pederast, are present in both the particular things and their identifying words. Inextricably tied to the word 'homosexual' are also the universals of *not* heterosexual, *not* straight, and *not* normal. This was the compartmentalization that Orton sought to destroy. He put the stymieing morality of his time on stage along with the inversion of prevailing homosexual and heterosexual ideals to force people to think about them. Because morality was mobilized against his own sexual liberation, Orton used it to indict society.

Pliable, amorphous, and sexually fluid, Sloane was Orton's attempt to demonstrate how groundless British morals were. Sloane is the representation of a new (a)moral reality, he bargains with others in order to have them provide for his material needs, and the only thing he's really concerned about is his survival. In contrast to the siblings who construct morals or

[32] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 148.

principles by recycling mass media and political language, Sloane has no need to maintain a moral pretense. And yet, true to his form of inversion and thus negation, Orton provides Sloane with an actual moral sensibility as evidenced when Sloane shows remorse for killing Kemp's boss, and then again when he kills Kemp. Along with the deteriorating Kemp, Sloane must struggle to survive and as such, Orton set up the confrontation between two dissonant realities.

The father of Ed and Kath, Kemp is the only character in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* who maintains a sense of traditionalism. Kemp "retains conventional moral and societal underpinnings," and is steadfast in both his refusal to accept his son's homosexuality and in wanting to expose Sloane as a murderer.[33] Interestingly, in an interview with Simon Trussler, Orton dismissed Kemp's character as a necessity for structure but not without alluding to some significance. "Kemp is literally tottering on the edge of the grave," he said, "and as a character he is, of course, very much smaller than the other three."[34] But in a later interview with Glenn Loney, Orton admits to the ritualistic importance of Kemp. Speaking about myth, Orton said, "Symbolism like [ritual murder from *The Golden Bough*] should be integrated into the play. I mean, in *Sloane* I'm aware of the symbols of the waste-land, and of the house at the edge of the waste-land. And that the old man is the king of the waste-land, who is killed by the young man. But it doesn't matter for *Sloane* if you haven't read *The Golden Bough*."[35] Perhaps he wasn't fully conscious of forcing a moral showdown, but Orton was prepared to sacrifice the elderly character and let Sloane triumph to resolve the play. Kemp is the embodiment of the ossified social morality that Orton was trying to destroy, the same one that enforced sexual compartmentalization. When the old, "tottering," overly moral Kemp encounters the fresh,

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[33] Rusinko, *Joe Orton*, 75.
[34] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism*, 392.
[35] Orton to Glenn Loney. "Entertaining Mr. Loney," 303.

young, and innocently amoral Sloane, it is a confrontation between the old moral standards and a new sexual freedom. When Sloane kills the "king of the waste-land" new triumphs over old, and amorality reigns over loss of traditionalism.

Realizing he's killed another man, Sloane's immediate reaction to Kemp's death may be more a sense of self-preservation than the weight of his conscience. The fear of facing a world that refuses to recognize his innocent intentions would help account for Sloane's panic. But even franticly seeking to preserve himself doesn't stop Sloane from feeling bad. His morality is more universal than Kath's or Ed's, a fact that both Orton's critics fail to perceive. Even if destroying Kemp was accidental, it signals the end of an era for the remaining characters. Kemp's death crystalizes an (a)moral reality for Orton's audience, "Just as humor should make the sex more real, so too it should make Sloane's murder of Kemp more real," he said, "put a murder on the stage with a straight face, and it's just a whodunnit and nobody takes it seriously. Make it funny and you make people think about it."[36] Humor was Orton's weapon to "break down the solid state of society," said Lahr, "his theme [was] to let laughter be lethal and irresistible."[37]

With the end of Kemp, Orton displayed the death of a social reality that was true to itself, no matter how archaic its morality was. Kemp was outdated and aware of his impending death. Sloane replaces Kemp, both figuratively and literally. Sloane's destruction of the traditional moral order is successful, and he becomes the new common thread between Kath and Ed. The triumphs of act three, the characters overcoming their situation, signals a new order of things. Orton realized that along with the triumph of advanced industrial society came a supporting (a)morality. He then saw these values as simple ideals that didn't "disturb unduly the established way of life." The amoral behavior of Kath and Ed demonstrates that their purported morals "are

[36] Trussler interview, *Plays and Players*, from *Drama Criticism*, 392.
[37] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 119-20.

not invalidated by the fact that they are contradicted by a behavior dictated by the daily necessities." Orton saw society in London becoming devoid of any real attachment to traditional morality. The destruction of the traditional moral authority generally passed unnoticed for those already included in society and Orton was determined to showcase it. A new (a)morality was welcomed because it allowed those subsumed by the technological rationality to continue happily with their constructed realities. But this new (a)morality only functioned for people included within the dominant reality. Orton needed to destroy Kemp because the remnants of traditional morality continued to underpin the social exclusion of homosexuals like himself. The destruction and replacement of morality was important because, contrary to what Marcuse saw, "factors of social cohesion" continued to buttress the rational for social division. Orton understood that morality was mobilized to sustain social stigmatization and place homosexuals on the fringes of society.

Kemp's loss is dismissed and brushed aside in order that Kath and Ed maintain their happy satisfaction. "Well, it's been a pleasant morning" remarks Ed at the end of the play, despite the death of his father. So long as Ed gets to live with the happy life, he seems fine with reconstructing his reality around Sloane. Ed's quick turn around when confronting Sloane about Kemp's murder is completely logical for his constructed reality, while Lahr sees this as conflicting with Ed's morality. I submit that Ed's choice aligns with his actual amorality and represents a new (a)moral construction in contrast to traditionally socially constructed moral norms. Lahr can surmise that Ed's actions are out-of-sync because he relies on traditional and heteronormative constructions of morality. This new (a)morality is a universal representation of freedom from traditional morality in an artistic form while simultaneously displaying the moral relativity of society. While Kemp had refused to speak with Ed because he caught him in a

homosexual act, his treatment of Ed was synonymous with society's treatment of homosexuals. Ed became a non-being to Kemp, and was something to be ignored and remembered fondly, as if some terrible tragedy had befallen him in his youth. Ed on the other hand has been trying to get his 'Dadda' to speak to him for some 20 years. Ed becomes emotional in response to Kemp's sudden willingness to speak with him in Act II,

> KEMP. Is Ed there with you? (*Pause*.) Ed?
> ED (*with emotion).* Dad… (*He goes to* KEMP, *puts an arm round his shoulder.*) What's come over you?
>
> KEMP *clutches* ED*'s coat, almost falls to his knees.* ED *supports him.*
>
> Don't kneel to me. I forgive you. I'm the one to kneel.
> KEMP. No, no.
> ED. Pat me on the head. Pronounce a blessing. Forgive and forget, eh? I'm sorry and so are you.[38]

While Ed has been seeking to reunite with his father, both he and Kath have been trying to get Kemp to sign some paperwork (whether for the deed to the house or to place him in a home is unclear). Both have been trying to free themselves from Kemp for some time. Ed and Kath both have a desire to be rid of a nuisance, something old lying around that reminds both siblings of what actually adhering to traditional mores looks like. While Kath's early life 'improprieties' are no problem for Kemp he's not exactly supportive of Kath's life choices. Society's old moral order was constructed to support a heteronormative and traditional family structure. With Kemp's death both brother and sister are freed from both any lingering allegiance to tradition.

Lahr, relying on a traditional sense of morality, misses the new freedom that Ed gains to live guiltlessly with a male lover, a prospect that was originally denied to him. Similarly, Bigsby says that Sloane's willingness to go along with Ed helps to "[underscore] the collapse alike of a

[38] Orton, "Sloane," Complete Plays, 115.

moral view and of the language that supported it."[39] If morality was mobilized to keep particular groups outside of society, then its destruction was important for Orton if he was to suggest an alternative. Sloane's destruction of Kemp and the old moral consciousness was not intentional but instead more of a natural outcome. While Marcuse missed the moral dimension of the social order in *One-Dimensional Man*, he was not ignorant of disenfranchised groups. He lists "the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and unemployable," as those capable of revolting against the dominant order.[40] We can add to Marcuse's list of persecuted groups homosexuals, who were pathologized and stigmatized by the dominant society. The deployment of morality to justify such marginalization had to be confronted and destroyed if homosexuals were to gain admission to the wider social body. With the destruction of Kemp, the newly freed trio are forced to deal with a new set of possibilities and altered circumstances. If Sloane is to survive greater society's sense of Justice, he must submit himself to those in his life who maintain power. Sloane's innocence doesn't make him naïve, nor does it translate to some sense of fearless immortality. On the contrary, he is vividly aware of the tenuousness of life and reality. Echoing reality outside the theatre, in order for this new (a)morality to survive, it must be successfully coopted by forces who benefit from it. In this manner, it translates into a new Marcusean socially cohesive "idea." Such a movement or exchange of (a)moral ideas demonstrates the dominating and appropriative powers of Marcuse's advanced industrial society. Control over the new moral freedom is sought immediately, allowing both love and tragedy to triumph in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*.

Aesthetic Resolution

[39] Bigsby, *Joe Orton*, 30.
[40] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 256.

> Thus the man who is responsive to artistic stimuli reacts to the reality of dreams as does the philosopher to the reality of existence; he observes closely, and he enjoys his observation: for it is out of these images that he interprets life, out of these processes that he trains himself for life.
> –Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*

From the death of Kemp to the surviving character's dissonant realities, Orton systematically exposed the façade of the advanced industrial society's moral and social realities. Kemp's death signaled the end of a traditional social reality for his characters. The new reality of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*'s surviving characters signaled to the audience the unreality of the their society. As Act III unfolds, the siblings Ed and Kath trade verbal barbs back and forth over who gets to keep Sloane. From the start, Orton casts the conflict in contrast to the reality of homosexuals. Ed's promise of 'Freedom' is puzzling in a world stripped of any meaningful metaphysics as Bigsby contends.[41] But the reference to such universals during the historical reality for homosexuals is what Marcuse refers to as "the Beautiful" in *The Aesthetic Dimension* or the "*promesse de bonheur*" in *One-Dimensional Man.*[42] In the early 1960s London such a 'freedom' was seen as 'immoral.' Orton completes his now characteristic inversion when Ed says to Kath, "You're immoral." Kath's defense, "It's natural," reflects a long standing argument against homosexuality. Ed mobilizes a defense just as old, replying, "He's clean-living by nature; that's every man's right," playing on beliefs of catching a disease through sexual contact with women. With no response to the argument Kath asks, "What are you going to give him?" Ed's reply, "The world," is incoherent to Kath. Whether or Kath know about or acknowledges her brother's homosexuality is never addressed in the play. Kath's cluelessness about her brother might the unintelligibility of Ed's remark. Kath's confusion and dissonant reality are reinforced

[41] Bigsby, *Joe Orton*, 30.
[42] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 62 and Marcuse, *One-Dimensional,* 62.

by a production note Orton included for the American director Alan Schneider. "Must pause after Ed's 'the world.' Kath has no reply to what Ed has said, she doesn't understand what he means, so, like any woman, she changes the subject rapidly to something else. Must see that for a fraction of a second she's baffled."[43] Ed's promise of Freedom and the world represent Marcuse's "the Beautiful," an ideal that homosexuality can offer when freed from the fetters of the old social morality.

The only thing left standing in the way of Ed being with Sloane is Kath's claim on the boy. Orton had little affection for heterosexuality, and Kath is the only remnant of that reality left in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. Ed's malicious treatment of his sister is Orton's last assault on the norm. Ed drags her in front of a mirror saying, "Look in the glass, lady. Let's enjoy a laugh. (*He takes her to the mirror*.) What do you see?" The irony is that the entire show is meant to be a 'glass' for the audience to recognize its own ugliness. "You look like death, what a martyrdom, [your] appetite [is] appalling, insatiable…" Each line of Ed's can be leveled at the socialites he was attacking and the propriety they wrapped themselves in. Orton was out to offend the "Aunt Edna's" of his world, proper English women who gave a voice to moralizing attitudes by writing into papers in response to scandalous events. These women, and sometimes men, condemned the deterioration of society from vice and contamination. Orton mocked them and their concerns habitually and took pleasure in doing so.[44] Orton's pleasure undoubtedly increased knowing when his audience was laughing at Ed's treatment of Kath, they were unknowingly laughing at themselves. If Kemp represented the old moral order, Kath is the new 'modern society' made up of nothing more than recycled language. Built on shallow reproductions, Kath's world is like the remaining façade after a buildings foundations have been knocked away.

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[43] Orton to Alan Schneider, production note, from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears,* 162.
[44] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 115-8.

It's easy to dismiss Kath as being the product of unconscious delusions: the superficial, lustful, middle-aged disgraced widow whose happiness is built by unconsciously adopting a media-driven language to exist in a world constructed for her. But her sexual desire is strong enough that she can shift her moral perspective at will. Orton's Kath has agency, but it is simply tied to her sexuality. Drawing the play closer to a Marcusean one-dimensionality, Bigsby remarks that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is a "picture [of] an antinomian world inhabited by spiritually debilitated characters, a world that is not so much a product of social forces as productive of them."[45] Instead of this one-directional production, I propose that Kath's power contributes to a reflexive sexual reality, built both for and by her simultaneously. It is this reflexive reality that contributes to the construction and enforcement of a status quo, a one-dimensionality. Orton inverted his world that on the surface expected people to exert willpower and control their sexual desires. Orton revealed the unreality of the given and exposed his audience to their own hypocrisy.

The only dimension of choice in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, of freedom to make decisions, revolves around sexual satisfaction and pleasure. Because Orton saw this as a negated reality in his world, it became the only freedom possible for his characters. Liberating sexuality from its social compartmentalization was the "*promesse de bonheur.*" Orton's aesthetic sublimation of reality's sexual absurdities into his play provides a vision of life defined by sexual needs but also free of any social conventions at the same time. It is "the affirmative, reconciliation component of art, though it is at the same time a vehicle for the critical, negating function of art."[46] Precisely because homosexuality in the 60s was still attached to moral disorder and 'perversion,' Orton's depiction of Sloane and his sexual fluidity was a powerful negating force of social conventions.

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[45] Bigsby, *Joe Orton*, 35.
[46] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 7.

Sloane's sexuality refuses the categorization that Orton's society forced upon people. Sloane is happy to be involved with either women or men or both. In the dialectical resolution of the play, Sloane is both freed and dominated by the siblings.

Marcuse's advanced industrial society is "a system of subdued pluralism, in which the competing institutions concur in solidifying the power of the whole over the individual."[47] If Sloane is to survive in the world without any traditional mores he finds that he must submit to the will of social constructions. For Marcuse, pluralist society gives the dominant system the ability to resist the production of alternatives. The "system of countervailing powers […] cancel each other out in a higher unification—the common interest to defend and extend the established position, to combat the historical alternatives, to contain qualitative change… Mak[ing] the [dominant society] immune against negation from within as well as without."[48] While sexuality's freedom (Sloane's freedom) from traditional mores (Kemp) was the "*promesse de bonheur,*" it freedom (Sloane) is quickly contained and managed by the countervailing powers. In Marcuse's one-dimensionality there are no immediate opportunities for escape, and so the same is true for Sloane. Sloane is "the dialectic of affirmation and negation, consolidation and sorrow is the dialectic of the Beautiful."[49] With his goal for survival fulfilled and his freedom achieved, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* resolves with Sloane entertaining the siblings Ed and Kath and becomes an object of shared property between them.

For Marcuse, before the encroachment of advanced industrial society's liquefying forces, art was alienating and served to sustain and protect a contradiction between universal promises of truth, beauty and destruction. *Mr. Sloane* was artistic alienation of a homosexual reality and

[47] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 50.
[48] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 51.
[49] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 63.

portrayed "the unhappy consciousness of the divided world, defeated possibilities, the hopes unfulfilled, and the promises betrayed."[50] The conclusion of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, was both joyful and tragic for a homosexual reality: Sloane and Ed end the show together but come six-month's time, Sloane must return to Kath. Sloane agrees to satisfy the sexual needs of both Kath and Ed in order to avoid punishment for murdering Kemp. He accepts a life of sexual service to preserve himself, but doing so goes against his laissez-faire nature. Both *Eros* and *Thanatos* triumph with all of Orton's remaining characters, fulfilling Marcuse's description of art's original contradictory state: "to live one's love and hatred, to live that which one *is* means defeat, resignation, and death."[51] Kath ends the play happily awaiting motherhood and knowing that she'll get Sloane back in half a year but sitting alone on her settee. Ed gets the 'mattie' he lost to Kath long ago but must surrender him again in six-months. Sloane survives but the easy life he was accustomed to is no more. *Eros* and *Thanatos*, the "primary erotic-destructive forces which explode the normal universe of communication and behavior," are set free, and *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* opens "the tabooed zones of nature and society in which even death and the devil are enlisted as allies in the refusal to abide by the law and order of repression."[52]

Orton was clear that he wished to confront the absurdities of English life. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was a perfect example of the repression and self-contradicting hypocrisy that Orton saw in everyday life. Marcuse says that the old forms of Art "reveal[ed] a dimension of man and nature which was repressed and repelled in reality."[53] As a farcical representation, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* re-presented the 1906s reality of sexuality in general and homosexuality specifically. What made it disruptive was that it exposed the terrors and repressed sexual tensions underlying

[50] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 61.
[51] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 61.
[52] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 20-1.
[53] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 61.

culture and status quo. "[Complete sexual license is] the only way to smash the wretched civilization," Orton said in his diary when reflecting on rewrites for his last play *What the Butler Saw*, "Yes. Sex is the only way to infuriate them. Much more fucking and they'll be screaming hysterics in next to no time."[54]

[54] Joe Orton, *The Orton Diaries*, Edited by John Lahr, (London: Methuen London Ltd, 1986), 125.

Conclusion- Marcuse's Last Word

> I have never seen myself as a spokesman. I am a witness**.** In the church in which I was raised you were supposed to bear witness to the truth. Now, later on, you wonder what in the world the truth is, but you do know what a lie is.
>
> –Interview with Julius Lester, "James Baldwin: Reflections of a Maverick" in *The New York Times*

The mixed reception of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* indicated how controversial the play was to English society in 1964. Without a doubt it represents the work of an avant-garde artist and, in fact, Orton was considered to be a successor of the avant-garde playwrights from the previous decade. Despite that view, the show ran for a total of less than one year. When the play transferred to the West End, it did manage to stir up controversy in the theatre world. In an oblique reference to the play, Peter Cadbury, the chair of London's largest ticket agency, was critical of shows that were "'unsuitable and unacceptable to a large part of the public' and that 'reflect the lowest forms of human life…"[1] But beyond providing fodder for the show's sensational advertisements, the controversy had little effect on the immediate lives on homosexual men. The only homosexual who benefited was Orton himself. The play came in second for best new British play in *Variety's* London Critic's Poll, and Orton was just two votes shy of being named the most promising playwright of the year.[2] Meanwhile, homosexuals continued to face prejudice and persecution and to ask for "pity and understanding."[3] Orton's indictment, it seems, fell on deaf ears.

Part of Marcuse's theory on one-dimensionality includes advanced industrial society's ability to stifle the avant-garde's power of negation. But, part of those controls over the avant-

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[1] Uncited from Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*, 172.
[2] Lahr, *Prick Up Your Ears*,, 171.
[3] de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience,* 101.

garde operate through an appropriation of art, and a liquidation of its negation as a consequence of its dissemination to the wider public, which is certainly not what happened with Orton's play. Marcuse would have to admit that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was avant-garde work and contained the power of social negation. He would admit that Orton's work was intended to negate society and that its attack against society was multidimensional. From sexuality to pop-culture language to liberal principles, Marcuse would see Orton's indictments against the advanced industrial society. But the question remains, how would Marcuse see Orton's confrontation of prevailing moral attitudes? Marcuse's cursory gesture toward morality in *One-Dimensional Man* presents a serious problem in his argument against advanced industrial civilization. In philosophy, the prevailing system of ethics was utilitarianism. Utilitarianism's emphasis that maximizing happiness is to maximize utility not only supports a technological rationality, but promotes it. In the mid-twentieth century, the remnants of religion's moral codes were in the process of being stripped away from British secular society. This was evidenced by the Anglican Church's desire to separate crime from sin. I submit that the triumph of technological rationality required an equally technological morality: utilitarianism.

In the case of England, the fall of Christianity's influence on the social lives of individuals made room for both a technological rationality as well as an ethos of utilitarianism. In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse says that the "quantification of nature,[…]separated the true from the good, science from ethics."[4] But this fails to account for an analogous rise in the attempt to quantify "the good." In response to the achievements of a Newtonian understanding of the universe from the preceding century, philosophers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sought to extrapolate an ethics based on mathematical principles; Jeremy Bentham's hedonic

[4] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 146.

calculus is a prime example. John Stewart Mill, Bentham's and utilitarianism's philosophical successor, rejected Bentham's particular method of calculus. Instead he sought to define qualitative differences between higher and lower pleasures. But ultimately he still believed that maximizing happiness was society's goal. An ethics of quantifiable 'goodness' would serve as further justification of advanced industrial civilization's technological ability to deliver the goods.

In advanced industrial civilizations, art is 'useful' because, as Marcuse points out, it fulfills the false needs for relaxation and entertainment. Prior to the actualization of advanced technological reality, art was an escape from the reality of existence into a second-dimension. I propose that in Marcuse's aesthetic dimension, an individual's realization of universal truths was reinforced by a moral code that defined the conceptions of "the Beautiful." Consider, for example, the ethos that stipulates that by denying the pleasures of this world and promoted a life of piety and poverty, after death one will be granted entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven. Now contrast that ethos in light of Marcuse's statement that "the dialectic of affirmation and negation, consolidation and sorrow is the dialectic of the Beautiful."[5] I am not arguing here that Christian systems of belief operate dialectically. What I am arguing is that Marcuse neglects morality's contributions to an individual's thinking and actions. In other words, morality helps us to define was is rational and rationality helps to define what is moral. Prior to the triumph of advanced industrial civilization, morality helped to define universal truths. Universal truths were then reduced to a quantifiable amount of good by utilitarianism acting in conjunction with the technological rationality. In privileging the role of rationality, Marcuse misses a cognitive dimension of human existence that helps give shape to our realities. The ability of advanced

[5] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 63.

industrial civilization to fulfill not only the vital needs, but also false ones, makes it appear objectively utilitarian. The technological reality's ability to produce the greatest amount of "the good" unifies utilitarian aims with technological rationality. Thus Marcuse's technological rationality is supported by an equally instrumental system of ethics. A utilitarian morality would help account for *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* not being appropriate by British society. The play did not provide the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest amount of people, and so, it would not have been rational to disseminate the play. The play's entertainment value was limited in English Society that retained semblances of traditional morality, no matter how emaciated it might have been.

Orton's approach was certainly controversial and contributed to a discourse on moral standards. But the show was too profoundly disruptive of prevailing moral attitudes, no matter their level of pretense, and couldn't be commercially coopted. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was deflected by society until later decades. Successful revivals in the 70s and 80s, could be attributed to the emergence of defiant gay-rights groups and greater visibility of homosexuality in general. The problem with measuring or tracing the actual effects of the play on the audience's thinking would require a combination of herculean historical efforts and a treasure trove of good luck. Tracking audience members, hoping they left letters or diaries and recorded their thoughts on the play or their discussions of it with friends, and tracking those friends and their writings would take an entire team of well-funded historians. Perhaps at best we can say that *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was a premonition of a wider revolutionary consciousness that followed the turn of the next decade. It is important to note, however, Orton's successful indictment of his society.

By applying Marcuse's aesthetics to Orton's play and then examining the critical responses to it, I arrive deductively at two conclusions and from these, venture to inductively

arrive at a third: first, avate-garde art functions as a social indictment and provides space to consider and reflect upon society's pretenses, second, that the work of avant-garde artists from marginalized communities can retain an element of truth lost to dominant society and enable them to name "the 'things that are absent,' breaking the spell of the things that are," and three, the work of the avant-garde can function as a weathervane for the winds of social change. The veracity of this last conclusion is only provided by my privileged position in the present to examine the past. While revealing the destination and a path for social change may ultimately be more-or-less impossible, I believe that art might serve as an indication of both the direction society ought to go and help to signal that society is already mobilizing. Marcuse comes to a similar conclusion when he says that "[art] does nothing in the struggle for liberation–except open the tabooed zones of nature and society in which even death and the devil are enlisted as allies in the refusal to abide by the law and order of repression."[6]

Gay liberation movements such as the Gay Liberation Front sprung up in England in 1970.[7] Inspired by similar civil rights and feminist movements and responding to the catalyzing Stone Wall riots in the U.S., these social movements rejected the apologetic stance of their predecessors. Untreated here, the Homosexual Law Reform Society simply advocated for the implementation of the Wolfenden Report's recommendations by working within the dominant governing systems and bowing to the view of the homosexual 'condition' as 'diseased.' Where there was shame and apology in the 1960s, the 70s brought pride and defiance. Homosexuals sought positive affirmation of newly established gay and lesbian identities rather than continue to submit to pathologized attitudes of perversion.

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[6] Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 63.
[7] Weeks, *Coming Out*, 185.

Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*, was imbued with a pessimism that stemmed from a burgeoning economic prosperity that followed in the wake of World War II. He believed that everyone would be satisfied by the new material realities that were a result of advanced industrial society's growing technological progress. And while he gestured to the downtrodden of society as potential sites for resistance or revolution, he failed to account for homosexuals and the moral forces employed to repress them. In 1964, Marcuse believed that the commercialization of sexuality would eliminate the erotic realm but his analyses suffered from his heterosexists standpoint. In retrospect he might admit that he too, suffered from an inability to think critically in that area. Orton would say that by living on the margins of the social body he had the ability to think critically about a world that rejected him. His artistic work represents a direct confrontation with the dominating forces of advanced industrial society that negated homosexuals. While Orton's initial attempts at negation helped propel him to theatrical success, and his subsequent plays found wider acceptance than *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, Marcuse might say that Orton's radical approach to sex made him into one of his own fictional characters (Whereas the opposite was actually true when he wrote himself into the character of Sloane). Such a transformation would have allowed society to write Orton off as a freak or other disruptive character. Orton could be psychologized and made susceptible to technologically rational solutions. Orton's susceptibility to the technological rationality was evidenced by the continued prevalence of the pathological approach to homosexuality in his time. Homosexuals were social aberrations who could be explained and dismissed the technological rationally. "Just as this society tends to reduce, and even absorb opposition (the qualitative difference!) in the realm of politics and higher culture, so it does in the instinctual sphere."[8] While Marcuse marks

[8] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 79.

the appropriation and dissemination of art as advanced industrial society's tool for destroying the avant-garde's ability of negation, he adds that in the cognitive realm "non-operational ideas, aspirations, memories and images have become expendable, irrational, confusing, or meaningless."[9] Joe Orton's ideas themselves were negated by a technological rationality bent on instrumentalizing the world. The triumph of a logical positivist project, of which Marcuse was critical, served to further destroy "the hated world of metaphysical ghosts, myths, legends, and illusions." Fantasy, tragedy, and comedy are all relegated to a harmless dimension empty of objective reality. In Marcuse's advanced industrial society, dangerous ideas are either dismissed as irrational or appropriated because they serve to create the greatest amount of good.

[9] Marcuse, *One-Dimensional*, 187.

Afterword

> The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently.
>
> –Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*

John Kingsley Orton came from a working-class background. His embrace of his homosexuality is recorded because his rise to notoriety made his story interesting and thus could be commodified and sold. In their respective works on the history of homosexuality in Britain, historians Matt Cook and Jeffrey Weeks discuss differences in identification and behaviors between men from different social classes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ideas do not appear in a vacuum and attitudes about sex and sexuality were susceptible to variation according to geographic location, social classes, and education (with the former historically predicating the latter). So I ask, what are the conditions of the present that give me the opportunity to cast Orton and his outlook on sexuality as a revolutionary premonition? Is it the fact that measuring ideas and their movements outside of an intelligentsia remains no small task for the historian? Was Orton actually part of a network of people whose ideas about sex reflected his own? Or was he a singularly defiant individual who rejected forms of traditional conceptualization?

By the middle of the twentieth century, men who participated in homosexual behavior in Britain, forced into a marginal existence outside the law, were merging into a shared identity across traditional social boundaries. Exemplifying such coalescence were authors who sought to speak for a collective identity in their books, *Against the Law* (1955) and *Queer People* (1963). The formation of a group identity marked an ability for homosexual individuals to attach themselves to a larger social body and alleviate their isolation. A new class of people emerged less than one hundred years ago and learned to recognize and speak for themselves using the language supplied by the dominant society. They organized around a collection of sexual

behaviors that demarcated them from a reproductive sexual norm. In our current historical viewfinder, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* helped to herald changes that were coming to the identification of homosexual men in the 1970s.

In *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse fails to fully account for the role of morality in shaping the perceptions of our lives and our actions. While I believe that this poses a significant problem for his social and political theories, I have attempted to address it in two ways. First, by hypothesizing that utilitarianism actually functions in conjunction with Marcuse's technological rationality, and second, by allowing to stand his analysis of technological rationality's ability to negate dangerous ideas as irrational. He says that any challenge to the authority of the one-dimensional society will either be coopted or negated by the technological rationality. Either the challenge helps promote the society in some way or, if it isn't productive of the good(s), it must be irrational and thus rejected. Technological society mobilizes to eliminate or assimilate interlopers from within and without. Such is the story of homosexuality in Britain throughout the twentieth century.

Like any good social science work, this investigation has opened more questions than it has answered. But perhaps as a show of resistance to the prevailing technological reality and the rationality that supports it, I will reserve my two-dimensional questions within my thinking and shan't record them here, lest they be eliminated or assimilated by the technological rationality. In the realm of philosophy, Marcuse's ethics (or lack thereof) require more attention and a more detailed analysis than I have given here. Marcuse's diagnosis of advanced industrial civilization's ability to enforce a tyranny of existence, however, remains highly relevant in our contemporary world of technological advancement. Compared to 1964, technological reality has evolved by light-years. As our current technological reality continues to create and fulfill new

and more false needs, we must question both our ability to think critically and our tacit acceptance of a technological rationality. The aesthetic dimension remains a space where we can cultivate our critical thinking abilities. By listening to the margins of society, and the avant-garde that reside there, we can hear whispers of social change. If we are concerned about social marginalization and the violence committed to marginal groups, perhaps then, it is our duty to listen closely and work to amplify their indictment.

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