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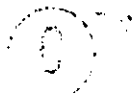
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE WILL TO LOVE: SUBVERTING MALENESS IN PLAYS BY CANADIAN MEN FROM HERBERT TO FRASER

BY

JAMES ALLEN CARR



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled, THE WILL TO LOVE: SUBVERTING MALENESS IN PLAYS BY CANADIAN MEN FROM HERBERT TO FRASER submitted by JAMES ALLEN CARR in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

(Dr. D. Bessai, Supervisor)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Fortune and Men's Eyes by John Herbert, Hosanna, La Duchesse de Langeais and Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra by Michel Tremblay, Being at Home with Claude by René-Daniel Dubois, The Dressing Gown by Sky Gilbert, Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love by Brad Fraser and The Wedding Script by Don Hannah. Tremblay and Herbert founded a Canadian dramatic tradition which investigates and portrays male sexuality that is different and subversive of traditional sex roles. Subsequent playwrights approach the theme with greater formal and thematic sophistication and equal political intent. Ultimately, the plays by Hannah and Fraser show the greatest step in this tradition, as they integrate subversive male sexuality into mainstream drama.

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Introduction

Feminist critics have thoroughly examined the many questions relating to the role of women within the Western social structure. However, problems of male socialization within the gender roles constructed by a male-centred society remain less well investigated, especially in drama. Tennessee Williams may have been the first contemporary playwright to dramatize problems of maleness within society, beginning in the 1940's and 1950's, subtly in plays such as A Streetcar Named Desire and overtly in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. In the Canadian theatre, such questions were not dramatized until the late 1960's, with formative plays by John Herbert and Michel Tremblay, most notably Fortune and Men's Eyes (1965)[1] and Hosanna (1973) respectively[2]. Together these two vitally important plays founded a Canadian tradition of sorts, investigating and portraying the particularly male problems of sex and gender within a social milieu. In the portrayal of different and subversive male sexuality, both Tremblay and Herbert stood on the advance guard. The inherently political purpose of their drama worked well with the realistic form they both used to focus on the social significance of individual characters and their experiences. At the same time, both playwrights overlaid the realism of their plays with symbolic significance, working to broaden the social relevance of these personal male experiences even further.

It was only by the mid- to late-1980's that playwrights in Canada again took up the theme of different and, indeed, subversive male gender identities. While René-Daniel Dubois wrote Being at Home with Claude (1986)[3] in the realistic vein of his Québeccis predecessor, he took Tremblay's interest in psychological investigation onto a deeper and more complex level. The political message was the same, however, as both aimed to bring homosexuality out of the closet and in front of mainstream audiences, dramatizing the need for vital changes to the social construction of male sex roles. Sky Gilbert made an even more revolutionary step with his play, The Dressing Gown (1984)[4]. Instead of addressing mainstream audiences with a plea for tolerance, Gilbert instead addressed his play to gay men, illustrating with surreal effectiveness the universal gay male struggle toward self-acceptance against social stigma. Both playwrights address the experience of gay men (one of the most marginalized groups in contemporary society) and make a cultural phenomenon of it.

The development from the 1960's to the 1990's not only illustrates the wider development of theatrical innovation but it also shows a greater acceptance among playwrights and society in general toward questions of sex and gender. Both Fortune and Men's Eyes and Hosanna were thematically innovative in their time, especially for Canadian theatre audiences, and they focused almost exclusively upon their themes of sexual and gender identity. Later plays that deal

with this theme have widened the discussion to investigate more encompassing questions of identity and relationships. Thus, sexuality has been integrated into the mainstream of public discussion. Hannah's The Wedding Script (1986)[5] best illustrates this integration: the play dramatizes a community where the norms of marriage and monogamy are completely overturned. While most of the characters are heterosexual, the central and transcendent figure is a transsexual whose personal liberation from gender roles is a beacon for them to follow. In Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love (1989)[6], Brad Fraser focuses upon sexual relationships, but he also uses male sexuality as a springboard for investigation into the broader human questions of self-acceptance, loneliness and the need for love. Sexual frustration influences more than one isolated aspect of the human experience. It permeates all other facets of life, from the desire to escape reality through self-degradation to the desire to kill. These later plays broaden the simple significance of sexuality into a confrontation of the basic fabric of the self in all respects.

i.

All these plays share a paramount concern for the human degradation wrought from frustration and alienation against a backdrop of traditional taboos against these subjects in matters of identity, sexuality and repression. None of the

major characters in any of these plays exhibits the traditional stereotypes of male gender roles in society. All have had to confront the uniqueness and difference within themselves, to confront (on a conscious or unconscious level) the distance between the social ideal of the male and individual inner reality. The tumultuous (and unfortunately predictable) psychological result either degrades and threatens the inner psyche or it externalizes itself into violence. These plays are treatises of a sort, testimonials to the destructiveness of patriarchy on the experience of men. Just as feminist critics have investigated the burden of patriarchy on the lives of women, so too do these plays address the problems wrought by male culture upon its own members. From the earliest play by Herbert to Unidentified Human Remains, audiences are assaulted with images of tortured souls, the souls of men who do not fit into male Canadian culture, and who are ripped apart by the inadequacy of their own culture to accommodate their inner realities.

A major part of the social subversion of all of these plays resides in each play's sympathetic affirmation of the struggles of male social outcasts, whether they are homosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals or heterosexual men whose inner truths do not fit the social norm. In its own way, each play manipulates the audience into accepting the virtue of the subversive sexual experiences that they portray. Characters may stand as surrogates for the audience and the

social intolerance of general society, or audiences may be manipulated into facing their own intolerance by making incorrect judgments of the characters, only to see a destructive truth behind the surface of those judgements. All the plays share the aim of attempting to reeducate their audiences toward the painful truths behind male gender socialization.

Each work addresses the fundamental question of what it means to be male in contemporary Canadian society. Three central aspects of gender -- biological sex, social roles and sexual orientation -- are all dealt with here. Hosanna, La Duchesse de Langeais, Damnée Manon, Sacrée Sandra and The Wedding Script discuss the biological facts of maleness which the focal characters of these two plays confront. Tremblay's drag queens, like the queen (Steven) of The Dressing Gown, live detached from their own male bodies. They dress as women to escape the limitations and physical requirements of their own form. They have a profound desire to escape all things male, if only for an evening, on a specifically social level. These men object utterly to the social construction of maleness, and so they look toward becoming female. Alex, the transsexual in The Wedding Script has surgically removed his maleness. He has become a female both in social and biological reality; she has removed the gap between her social identity as a male and her inner reality as a female. The play lauds such an honest commitment to the self.

The working of sex roles against individual identity poses a more universalized problem. In this regard, these plays highlight the need for men to escape the gender role requirements imposed by society. From Smitty in Fortune and Men's Eyes to Bob in The Wedding Script, fairly similar (apparently heterosexual) characters face the requirements of dealing with the social construction of maleness and their own internal distance from it. They all search for room to be themselves, but are oppressed by restrictive social norms. None of these characters meets the social requirements for men -- none is "normal" -- all are detached and all experience the same sort of emotional struggle to find their true selves against the wishes of their peers.

As the other main element of male sexuality, sexual orientation either pervades or at least touches the text, especially in treatments of homosexuality. Indeed, as these plays are about the detachment of men from male-oriented society, it is only appropriate that homosexuals -- the group probably the most estranged from the social structures of their own society -- should be the focus. Their orientation escapes the confinement of social programming and represents more than just a social act. It illustrates the ultimate rejection or subversion of the roles and behavior "normal" men are supposed to follow according to society. If the difference between their individual behavior and their gender stereotype requirements disturbed some of the heterosexual men in these

plays, then the difference even more intensely torments the gay male characters. As a result of each character's confrontation with his homosexuality, each recreates himself in a slightly different way, though common patterns emerge. The characters of Rocky (in Fortune and Men's Eyes) and Bernie (in Unidentified Human Remains), for example, are parallel in their inability to accept the truths about themselves; both externalize their frustration into violence. Similarly, the leathermen in The Dressing Gown display violent, sadistic urges: in them, the inner struggle has led to a degree of self-acceptance but also to anger and hostility. The effeminate Mona (of Fortune and Men's Eyes), and even David (of Unidentified Human Remains) both learn to accept themselves positively, and they all stand for the best individual alternatives when each play is done. They all cast off the negativity society would impose upon them for being homosexual or for being effeminate, to live by their inner truths. They are beacons for the humane development of society.

ii.

Gilbert's and Tremblay's seminal works on the questions of subversion and male sexuality form a set of parallel tracks which later Canadian playwrights develop and enhance. In the plays that follow Herbert's example, The Wedding Script in particular (as well as Human Remains and The Dressing Gown),

the form emphasizes the social identities of the characters, within a heightened social atmosphere. The atmosphere and its significance upon the developing lives of the characters is paramount to the themes of the plays. While audiences do not see directly into the thoughts of Mona or Queenie (though one is invited to surmise their underlying motivations), we see the entirely social creatures they have become. The prison is a heightened microcosm of the outside world: the prisoners' fights to survive within that world -- and indeed their fights to retain their identities against social pressures -- is the central focus.

The track set out by Tremblay deems the characters' social identities to be very important. What is more important, however, is the internalized discussion that occurs within the mind through the use of monologues. Audiences see past the surface into a deeper probing of the character's inner tortures. The individuals created by both Tremblay and Herbert are tortured by the distance between their social identities and their unrealized personal ideals, but Tremblay shows a more personalized interest. Herbert highlights social constructions with a complex of personal struggles interacting on the social level; Tremblay looks from the inside out, with inner truths fighting against social constrictions.

It is no coincidence that the Québecois René-Daniel Dubois's contribution would closely follow Tremblay's example. Being at Home with Claude probes deeply into the internal

motivations and life struggle of the main character, Yves. Questions of sex have deep personal implications for ideas of the whole self. Through an extended final monologue, Yves reveals the gap between his individual ideal identity and the feelings society would oppress.

In other plays, the distinct approaches of Herbert and Tremblay merge. Indeed, the plays by Gilbert and Fraser illustrate a good balance between internal (psychological) and external (social) dramatization. The social interactions of Fraser's David, for example, illustrate the internal moral struggle he undergoes with his self-conceptions of his sexuality and personal direction. Gilbert presents a montage of distinct individuals and social interactions which work together to define the maturation process of a single, individual (yet universalized) gay man. Both Fraser and Gilbert present remarkably intense examinations of both psychology and society as men confront their sexual difference.

Don Hannah's play looks back directly to John Herbert. However, Hannah does not deal directly with male homosexuality. Rather, he integrates subversive male sexual experience (in the person of Alex) into a far wider discussion of the individual needs and desires that conflict with social tradition. His intent is just as political, but his interest is not only in male sexuality but in questions of the essential individual differences which comprise humanity.

iii.

Both Herbert's and Tremblay's plays depend heavily upon realistic and sympathetic characters. Paradoxically, in each play the main characters may also be resolved into simple types, with their political purpose showing through. Through the struggles of all the characters the basic theme of each play surfaces. Audiences are drawn into a whirlwind of trials and conflicting emotion, an effect that is due to the realism of the plays. While both may be understood on a symbolic level, the most immediate effect of each play is to render a brutally plain landscape of emotions laid bare. The effects resonate with almost domestic familiarity. Neither play uses particularly innovative staging or effects. Herbert's staging is realistic and fairly static; in Tremblay, we are invited to relive Hosanna's humiliation through his monologues, and the drama occurs through words and dialogue rather than visual effects. The focus is almost entirely upon character.

In both cases, however, their individual realism also symbolizes a broader social and political reality. Several dramaturgical considerations in Herbert resonate with symbolic importance. Relative physical distances between characters, for example, tell the story of the brutal sexual politics occurring there, echoing the hierarchical social implications of the physical place in sexual intercourse. Hosanna also overlays symbolic resonance upon realistic staging and dramaturgy. The apartment is plain and tatty, but small things

like the perfume speak volumes for Hosanna's psychological state. On a superficial level, further, Hosanna is merely undressing for bed, but his undressing also symbolizes a casting off of artificial identities. Thus there are indeed a few visual clues to the broader, symbolic significance of these realistic, individual experiences.

Taken together, René-Daniel Dubois and Sky Gilbert illustrate the diverse formal approaches taken by playwrights in further developing themes of different male sexuality. Though the techniques are different, both dramatize the often destructive struggle of gay men against their homophobic society. Dubois works from the inspiration of Tremblay, using severe psychological realism and monologues to communicate a symbolic and significant personal experience. While Herbert focused on character interaction to create a political comment on social structures, Dubois relies instead upon the interaction of two individuals to express personal psychological experience against social control. Though there are symbolic elements to be drawn from the play (especially the significance of the Inspector), Being at Home with Claude has a remarkably linear and expository form, in direct contrast to Gilbert[7], who uses a remarkably symbolic and non-linear form to tell its political tale. The Dressing Gown symbolically and visually unites (through the dressing gown) remarkably disconnected scenes with different characters to

create a montage of experience and feeling to present a similar political message as Dubois.

Finally, Don Hannah and Brad Fraser step between the exposition of Dubois and the symbolism of Gilbert. While Hannah's play is linear and direct on the surface, the staging is layered with symbolic resonance. The focal place of Alex's house and deck echoes the significance of Alex herself as the moral focus around which the others circulate. The deck is a physical symbol which points further to the fact that the characters exist in a politically-significant microcosm. Fraser's microcosm, Unidentified Human Remains, works on a more visual and aural level, approaching Gilbert's technical strides. Scenes of sex acts and conversations occur simultaneously, with the words and thought of different characters intermingling as they all remain continuously on stage in multiple spaces. Conversations are interspersed with surreal, mystical and insightful voices from characters in the shadows, bringing the play's realism onto a higher, more universal plane of feeling and significance.

Though not so technically stunning as Sky Gilbert, Hannah and Fraser have written the most subversive plays. The Wedding Script and Unidentified Human Remains integrate transsexuality and homosexuality into a broad social picture, demarginalizing them and removing their stigma. They show their audiences by example the normality of these untraditional male sexual

identities, demanding their acceptance into any broader discussions of personal needs and identity. The struggles of men with different sexual identities are thus necessary and vital for any honest dramatization of society and identity.

Chapter 1

John Herbert and the Tradition of the Social Polemic

The commercial and creative success of Fortune and Men's Eyes (first produced off-Broadway in 1967) has made the play significant among theatre people as well as broader Canadian society, reinforcing the impact of Herbert's main political and social purpose. Thus the play stands as an excellent example of art working hand in hand with polemics to serve a broad social purpose. What Herbert says fundamentally concerns the male individual within his society: his specific intention is to suggest that Western (specifically Canadian) society has created a narrow gender role for all men to follow, a role which (more often than not) stands at odds with the inner reality of male individuals. Society makes a uniform program for all men, from stereotypes of normal gender behavior (unemotional, aggressive and so on) to conceptions of normal sexual behavior and orientation (heterosexual). In reaction to this, Herbert has taken a sample of Canadian men and has placed them within a prison -- an intensified microcosm of Canadian society in general -- to illustrate forcefully the destructive and debasing influence of society's small-minded sexual stereotypes. Herbert's message resides within each of his characters as he places them -- and the facts of their individual identities -- in a struggle against a society that denies these facts. Herbert dwells upon this intense see-saw

between individual character and social environment, and, as a result, innovations in staging, narrative or visual effects are at a minimum; the real drama occurs within each character, and the struggle is externalized into physical violence between them.

On an entirely realistic level, Herbert's Fortune and Men's Eyes inquires into the links between sexuality and violence among men in prison. Yet his prison environment is merely a microcosm of society in general, whose social demands conflict directly with inner personal desires and motivations. On this symbolic level, then, each character stands as a figure for one of many different possible personal experiences that occur when sexuality and sexual desires confront social strictures. Prison is an intensified version of social reality, and the characters' super-realistic experiences there concretize Herbert's sexual/political program upon their specific individual lives while making the experience symbolic and universal.

Mona is the play's ultimate focus: much of whatever didactic intent Herbert has written into his play arises from the audience's interaction with this androgynous personage. Indeed, this character works to illustrate Herbert's message on two levels: within the play, we see Mona assaulted and abused for his individual (especially sexual) marginality despite his position as the most virtuous character. This

prejudice and hostility is mirrored across the proscenium arch by the discomfort a traditional audience might face in accepting Mona as a positive beacon within a destructive, prejudiced society. Mona is not simply one victim within a prison: he also stands as a symbolic social outcast, cast out by the general society represented by the audience.

Within the text of the play, the effeminate Mona combines his male sex with particularly feminine gender traits (something the camp Queenie might mimic on the surface only); his existence within the prison is a direct assault upon socially-directed gender roles and the audience is meant to see within this light the negativity and destructiveness of such social programming. Mona's femininity makes him a target, both because his behavior and his sexuality are threatening to the more insecure prisoners and officials around him, but also because his self-conscious gentleness makes him an easy physical target. The prisoners discuss Mona's sexual initiation into the prison system:

> QUEENIE: ...One day a bunch of hippos con her into the storeroom to get something for the game, and teach her another one instead. They make up the team, but she's the only basket. They all took a whack, and now she's public property.
>
> [...]
>
> MONA: They won't do it to him [Smitty]. He doesn't look gay, and he's probably not here on a sex charge. They felt I had no rights. (p. 62)

In this regard, Mona is doubly victimized by the other men. Because of his feminine gender traits, Mona is made to be a substitute woman, and as a woman is subjected to all the

sexual assaults the men wish to inflict. Further, Mona is not really a woman at all, but is a man who dares to break down the barriers between the genders in his own appearance and behavior. He is targeted as a freak, not quite a woman but certainly not deserving of the respect accorded to men. He is an easy victim of both the prisoners and the guards:

> MONA: bitterly They don't keep those little goodies [cats o'nine tails] because they have to but because they want to. Learn to look into their eyes before you stick out a hand. (p. 62)

Indeed, in this regard, the prison is merely western society intensified under the pressure of forced confinement: the gender-centred violence and intolerance directed against women and against the people who reject social gender conditioning is here focused against Mona. He is subjected to verbal assaults from the prisoners because of his dress, his makeup and his "feminine" demeanor. He is physically assaulted by the prisoners whenever the activity suits them, especially when Mona gets "uppity" and refuses to submit to their sexual abuse. He is subject to the physical violence of the administration, and, when he is refused permission to perform for the Christmas concert (p. 76), its humiliations.

Yet the most subversive aspect to Fortune and Men's Eyes is in this very dichotomy of Herbert's creation of Mona's inner spirit and his treatment of the character. Mona is a beacon for humanity within the particularly inhuman atmosphere of the prison. Only he looks for the virtues of Smitty, for

example, and only he can appeal to the gentleness and humanity of the young man. Mona's greatest desire is to perform for the Christmas concert, reciting Shakespeare's "Quality of Mercy" speech, only to be subjected to catcalls and ultimately denied the opportunity. While the audience of the play would certainly feel more comfortable with the threatening hostility of Queenie (despite his own ambiguity, he is easier to categorize as a stereotypical drag queen), Herbert takes the step of demanding sympathy for Mona, a homosexual transvestite. From the first, Mona is more articulate and sensitive, and less changed by the prison atmosphere. His final dialogue with Smitty overflows with warmth and sympathy and intelligence:

> MONA: It's to the world I dream in you belong. It endures better. I won't let you move over, into the other, where I would become worthless to you -- and myself. What my body does and feels is one thing, and what I think and feel apart from that is something else. (p. 78)

The characters who are most hostile to Mona -- Rocky and Queenie -- are also the least likable. To avoid identifying with people like Rocky, the audience has no choice but to side with Mona. The predictable discomfort in acquiescing to this requirement forces the audience to confront its own homophobia and intolerance. They must see the genuine love within Mona's words to Smitty, where his homosexual affections are portrayed as tender and sincere. Though the polemic is not always successful (as some early newspaper reviews would attest)[8], Herbert is demanding the audience to change.

Rocky and Smitty are the characters who at first have the least in common, yet who really have most in common in their parallel struggles between their inner desires and social attitudes. In a worst-case scenario, Rocky may only be Smitty with a few extra years of imprisonment behind him, since the older prisoner has already largely dealt with the same sorts of insecurities that now face Smitty. Each of them must deal with the same sort of internalized lies and deceptions through which they have managed to reconcile their inner desires and their social role[9].

Rocky takes pains to behave with as much affected masculine bravado as possible, underscoring his male dominance over his effeminate cellmates with as much violence as necessary[10]. He has claimed the position of sexual and social dominance over Mona and Queenie and quickly extends his reign over the new cellmate, Smitty, with expedience. Like the male-dominated society outside the prison walls, within the prison stereotypically male traits of aggression and violence devoid of humane emotion together stand as the basis for social climbing to a position of ultimate power. Rocky unquestionably recognizes this, using his physical strength to overwhelm Mona while using simple macho bravado to claim dominance over Queenie as well. (Of course, it suits the political aims of Queenie to accept Rocky's overlordship as well.)

When Smitty enters the cell at the opening of the play, the social interactions which unfolded to assert Rocky's original control over the cell are necessarily repeated. This time, the audience is able to watch. The manner in which Rocky aims to assert himself over Smitty is remarkable for its hypocrisy as well as its complexity, using both male-to-male platonic bonding overlaid with hints of affection and threats of physical assaults. Initially, while Mona attempts to relate to Smitty on a level of disinterested comraderie, Rocky initiates his plan for ultimate control over the newcomer. The first step is least threatening: with Queenie's "political" advice, Rocky endeavors to create a superficial bond of friendship with Smitty, affecting the same sort of disinterested concern over Smitty's welfare that Mona had earlier expressed. Rocky plays up his particularly stereotypical maleness to attain Smitty's admiration and respect.

Paradoxically, however, this level of admiration is clearly inadequate for Rocky's real intentions. Again with Queenie's help (here Queenie verges on a role as evil trickster), Rocky lures Smitty into the shower where the sexual undercurrent of their relationship breaks to the surface with real violence. Rocky's masculine affectations here are even further exaggerated, using physical strength to overwhelm Smitty into sexual submission. Clearly, this submission is as much social as it is sexual. Yet it is still

interesting to note that this stereotypically male bonding manner of Rocky, which depends so strongly on socially-conditioned conceptions of male gender, so smoothly and effectively merges into something completely at odds with traditional conceptions of interpersonal behavior for men: homosexual relations. As Mona Cardell suggests in her research, gay men often experience the greatest gaps of all social/sexual groups between their sex-role identities and their actual sex-role behavior (Cardell, p. 490). Through the character of Rocky, Herbert shows an accurate acquaintance with this fact. Never does Rocky openly question this contradiction.

Rocky's dominance depends wholly upon his integration of the male gender conditioning that validates aggression and violence (in the world at large), and his obviously internally-generated homosexual dominance of the other prisoners. Just as Mona's sex and gender seem to be at odds within the prison situation, allowing him to be treated both as a woman and as a male deviate, so too Rocky's motivations and desires seem to be a mismatch. He illustrates what Alan Gross terms the maladaptive results from a restrictive sex-typed socialization process for men, where sex-role qualities of control, power, aggression and violence are endemic. (Gross, p. 88) In the course of attaining full control over his environment, in the manner of intimidating and controlling women (as some men do to women in outside

society), Rocky has blended this sexual and physical domination over his male prison counterparts. Unlike his counterparts in general society, however, for Rocky this has required a bizarre reordering of his sexuality and his gender role. He is treating the other prisoners as though they were physiological women.

Unquestionably, a figure like Rocky would be just as abusive to women as to men if he were given the opportunity. Yet part of his extreme violence may indeed stem from his unadmitted homosexual desires. In the play, it is stated that Rocky had been chasing "fruits" outside of prison as well as within. Clearly, then, his prison sex is not simply a function of starvation for women, but it is something more. It is also interesting to note that of all the characters, Rocky is most particularly hostile to Mona, especially because of Mona's femininity. One possible (if not probable) conclusion that may be drawn is that Mona illustrates to Rocky what Rocky refuses to recognize within himself: his homosexuality. Indeed, sexuality is central to the development of masculine identity, and one result of the socialization process for men is the pressure to seek sex to validate their masculinity. Zealously masculine men like Rocky oversubscribe to masculine role images, combining aggression and sexuality to validate themselves (Gross, pp. 90-91). Rocky is unable to consciously make the distinction between a homosexual orientation and effeminacy, and he conveniently equates the two within Mona's

personality to reinforce his own prejudice in this regard. "Homophobia [in men like Rocky] may be regarded as an expression of anxiety regarding one's sexual impulses ... Homosexual feelings create such anxiety in these men that their [gay men's] existence cannot be tolerated" (Morin, p. 35). Indeed, general society itself rarely makes the distinction, integrating and ingraining the two into individual conceptions of inappropriate male gender behavior. Herbert has again expressed a truth, years before researchers validated his observations with their own evidence on the connection between intolerance for homosexuals and broader social and interpersonal intolerance (Morin, pp. 30-31) What threatens Rocky most, then, is not so much the physical acts equated with homosexuality but in fact the social injunction against the gender role subversion that his conception of homosexuality implies.

Despite his ravenous sexual appetite for the other male prisoners, Rocky is hardly "out" even to himself: these are not real men, anyway, and sex with them is something that is perfectly acceptable, given the prison situation (clearly, he never addresses his passion for "fruits" outside prison where women are also available). His sex with the other men is not only frequent, but also accompanied with extreme physical violence: indeed, this sex is where his most violent impulses are made concrete. When Rocky has sex, it is as much about physical desire as it is about power and degradation, since he

uses the opportunity to degrade and grind down the others, especially the openly gay prisoners. Violence against men (especially gay men) and sex are inextricably linked within Rocky. There can be no question, then, that much of this must be related to his own inability to break free of his gender role stereotypes, of which homophobia is integrally a part[11]. It is a truth that the worst homophobes are usually closeted homosexuals themselves, and Rocky would tend to fit this pattern: his violence stems directly from his repressed desires, his inability to merge his social role peaceably with his inner motivations. He is so tied to society's program for proper male, masculine behavior that he is a morass of conflicting feelings, outwardly manifesting pure malice.

The character of Smitty shows similar sexually ambiguous qualities, and, certainly by the end of the play, he also illustrates a capacity for the same level of violence. Smitty bridges the gap between the world of the play and the external world of the audience because of his apparent "normality". As a result, the audience watches and identifies with him. The audience focuses on Smitty, and through him they are introduced to the inevitable series of stages from sexual innocence toward a violent conflict between self and society. When the violence and negativity of Smitty's character eventually manifest themselves, Herbert's political points are brought home forcefully. This man may express his gender normalcy in a different orientation (the audience finds itself

identifying with a character who is, to say the least, sexually ambiguous). Further, the audience experiences the transition from innocence toward brutality with Smitty, rather than just observing it. Herbert attempts to erase the distance between the audience and the character, to create a picture that is sympathetic to the fragility of humanity within the confines of a hostile and destructive society.

The decline of Smitty follows a pattern that would seem inevitable. From the moment he is cast into Rocky's cell, he is targeted by the older prisoner for sexual and physical abuse. There can be no question, indeed, that Smitty's trials are unique to his situation: each cell has a prisoner who affects a position of power through sexual and physical violence. This is only a case study. Herbert would seem to counter the possibility that an innocent like Smitty would not possess some sexual ambiguity. Given the uniform sexual activities of all the other prisoners, Herbert would seem to be maintaining that the vast majority if not all men possess a degree of homosexual desire, however repressed. (This may, indeed, be Herbert's central theoretical flaw. On the surface, at least, he is conflating inherent homosexual desire and the prison sex that results from deprivation.) Undeniably, however, Smitty clearly possesses some kind of homosexual desire that comes to the surface in the course of the play under the intense pressure of prison life and Rocky particularly. After his rape by Rocky, the central place of

sexual activity as a symptom and indicator of the prison's power structure becomes apparent to Smitty. He repeatedly submits to Rocky's overtures with varying degrees of voluntary intent. His eventual attack of his sexual/political overlord shows that, under the brutality of Rocky, an equally brutal side of his own personality has come to the surface. Yet his sexual control over Rocky is not simply political and violent but like Rocky's also has overtones of sexual desire. Smitty makes frequent trips to the shower with Rocky at this point -- more, presumably, than would simply be needed to retain his assertion of control over the man. Indeed, his fight with Rocky would probably have been adequate to assert a superior political position. Smitty is also interested in the superior sexual position apart from its role as a political metaphor.

That a degree of homosexual desire surfaces with Smitty's growing presence within the prison is reinforced with his final affectionate conversation with Mona, who is Smitty's real object. In controlling Rocky, Smitty had already asserted control over the entire cell, as Queenie and especially Mona were already subdued and submissive before his arrival. Yet Smitty retains an interest in Mona that clearly goes beyond the political. Despite the threat to his own position of power, Smitty accords Mona a degree of respect and affection completely unsuitable to prison life. Their hushed tones and friendly -- if strained -- chatter attest to a real bond that goes beyond political posturing and platonic friendship. The

sexual nature of Smitty's overtones is clearly exposed by Mona who gently pushes the man away; Smitty's reaction is that of a spurned lover.

There is also the possibility that Smitty's affection for Mona could simply be, as Mona says, a function of deprivation of a heterosexual release (p. 78). Such an idea could be reinforced by the attitude that Smitty takes toward Mona near the end of the play, as well as the rhetoric with which he attempts to seduce Mona, speaking of him as though he were actually a woman, flattering Mona with adjectives traditionally deemed as female virtues.

Yet there are also some unsettling qualities to Smitty's posture that would tend to undercut this: Smitty himself makes the connection to the politics of sex in his overtures to Mona. He is connecting his homosexual acts with Rocky with his affection toward Mona (a presumption that Smitty and Mona would engage in the same acts). Homosexual acts as well as homosexual love by this point merge within Smitty's mind as he speaks to Mona. Certainly, the frequency and relish with which Smitty has sex with Rocky bespeaks something more than simple deprivation. Indeed, a close reading of Smitty reveals a gay male character who "comes out" rather than a sexually-deprived heterosexual.

When Smitty speaks in terms borrowed from stereotypes of female virtues to "woo" Mona, something more insidious is than a simple profession of love is going on. In Smitty's mind,

Mona has indeed taken the place of a woman on a political level. He offers Mona bribes of prison commodities in exchange for sex, mimicking the economic/sexual structure behind traditional heterosexual relationships. When he tries to seduce Mona, his posturing, which places himself on a different and higher level than his target, is an act that shows his consciousness of the relationship of power and sex. Smitty is indeed treating Mona as if he were a woman (through the desire is still consciously homosexual), and is following the disturbing example of Rocky in this respect. When Smitty is finally rejected by Mona, he casts her down with an attitude that speaks more about the mistreatment of women by men than prison sex or gay sex. Smitty's attitude is one of macho superiority in which he creates an emotionless shell of impermeability to underline his power.

Smitty is exhibiting the worst aspects of male gender stereotypes as taught by Western society, following ultimately in Rocky's footsteps. When he attacks Rocky and Queenie in revenge for their brutal attack upon Mona, he is like a lover defending his woman (and, predictably, does nothing to defend his woman rather than to attack other men after the fact). He indeed rules the cell by the end of the play, becoming indistinguishable from Rocky.

That Smitty has become this way is obvious, as is the audience manipulation inherent in his change. Motivational factors are less easy to establish, especially as they are

understood by the audience following Smitty's decline. There is an undercurrent of sexual repression in Smitty's character, even from the outset of the play. He consistently refuses to detail his sexual past, a refusal so insistent to suggest something strange, if not insidious. This fact, combined with his growing sexual desire for Rocky as well as his explicit desire for Mona all tend to suggest that what Smitty is hiding is repressed sexual (probably homosexual) desire. His initial asexuality contrasted with his taste for Rocky and Mona reinforce this possibility. If indeed Smitty is following Rocky's example in the political sexual power structure of the prison, Smitty could then be expressing the same repression-fed rage so transparent in Rocky. The motivation would then be the same for what is evidently the same result of violence. Homosexual repression, as urged (if not dictated) by male social/gender conditioning ends with the one, inevitable result.

Herbert also implies the point that violence is also the product of violence. Indeed, Smitty follows in the footsteps of Rocky, overturning their relative positions of power and submission, mimicking exactly the same violence inflicted upon him. All of the violence of the prison has sexual overtones, and is always the product of the interaction of the individual within the pressures of the social atmosphere. If the prison society were not so fixated upon power and social hierarchy, much of the motivation for violence would dissolve. The prison

is a creation of the society of the audience, and the audience is left holding the responsibility. This is Herbert's social/political program on a most obvious and realistic level (a message that was taken to heart by the groups that worked for prison reform in Canada, working from the inspiration of this play). The prison is also a microcosm of Canadian society in general. The same sorts of political power structures undoubtedly exist in general society, with levels of violence and sexism differing only by degree.

The character of Queenie is less integral to the sexual/political program of Fortune and Men's Eyes. He is also most ambiguous and least accessible. The psychology of Queenie is at once the most stereotypical, yet below the surface of Queenie's political posturing and camp behavior lies an unusual and indeed threatening subversion of the stereotype of the effeminate homosexual transvestite. In Queenie's case, the reader of Fortune and Men's Eyes has an initial advantage over an actual audience in uncovering the contradictions of Queenie's character. He is described in both overtly male and female gender types; he has both a heavily masculine body type (an element of biological sexual identity) with affectations of feminine gender traits. The political message is initially negative, if one is to look toward Herbert's programmatic hand in this character. Of all the characters of the play, Queenie is the most disconcerting, with no visible virtues. He has a more complex psyche than the heavy-handed Rocky, overlaying

his meanness with effective camp humor. Everything is done for a political purpose, to attempt to assert a degree of power despite his inevitable position of submission as an openly gay prisoner.

Herbert's creation of Queenie fits remarkably well into Sky Gilbert's analysis of the significance of gay camp.

> It is an expression of an oppressed and overwhelmed minority. Because gay men have been excluded from straight society, because they gave been ridiculed and ostracized, they have developed a special sense of humour, which is ultimately a way of communicating as well as a form of self-protection ... Camp is a kind of extreme profound materialism, and its very basis is also the very crux of humour -- comedy and farce; life is base, sad, violent and physical, and then we die. So the least we can do is get a good laugh out of exposing the human condition .("Closet Plays", p. 57)

Queenie compensates for the hopelessness of his position by overlaying his bitterness with satire.

Even so, Queenie veers almost too closely to the stereotype of the maladjusted homosexual since his homosexuality and his conniving nature are the two most obvious traits about his character. He possesses none of the stereotypical virtues of either a man or a woman: his physique is strong, yet fleshy and flabby. His womanliness is too affected and too satirical to be believed. Indeed, he is as aggressive toward Mona and Smitty as the most aggressive "macho" man, leading the physical attack upon Mona that ends the play. His female-stereotypical campiness merges with negative female stereotypes of deception and cruelty as he

tempts Smitty into the shower with Rocky and as he taunts him later.

The audience undoubtedly never identifies with Queenie, through it might initially look at him with a slightly positive eye as a function of his early role in comic relief. The individual distinctiveness of his character (specifically, both his homosexuality and his combination of negative male and female gender traits) would lead some members of the audience looking for explanations for his identity, however. At the time of writing and initial performance, 1965-1967, mainstream society was still looking for answers for the phenomenon of homosexuality and for its cure. The source of Queenie's sexual orientation is not something Herbert questions. Apart from Queenie's homosexuality, then, the question would be the genesis of his strange gender-twisting. For this, it is not difficult to look for a cause, at least in Herbert's mind. Queenie exists between the genders of male and female as they are constructed by Western society. He is either incapable or unwilling to make a complete switch to the female gender as is the case with Mona.

The ambiguity of Queenie and his violent nature may indeed have a common root and indeed his character may be read in the same manner as Smitty and, especially, Rocky. Just as they are products of their environment, so too is Queenie. Such a reading of Queenie would also reinforce the idea that the prison is a microcosm of general society: prison society, as

well as general society, would (certainly in the 1950's and 1960's) paint an openly homosexual man as something neither male nor female, breaking down all gender divisions, not only in sexual acts but in behavior and dress as well. Thus Queenie is just what society says he ought to be. His negative nature merely underlines his socially-programmed identity as a pervert. In those days, all gay men were deemed mentally ill and Queenie is merely acting out what he is already deemed to be.

All the characters live in the gap between their biological sex and the social roles expected from their biology. Rocky and Smitty repress the subversive social aspect of their homosexuality, instead expressing an exaggerated, overzealous maleness. Queenie and Mona completely reject the male social trappings of their biology, preferring to live and act as women. Together, they form a microcosm of manhood, underlining the various ways in which men deal with their individual and unique sexual conditions. Despite this variety, Herbert does not clearly draw a distinction between innate homosexuality and prison-driven sexual behaviour, for a subtle political purpose. He undoubtedly had the understanding that a play specifically about gay men could never have made it to the stage of the time. Instead, he wrote a play about gay men and placed it within the confines of a prison. He let his audiences make the mistake of believing that the play was

about the destructiveness of prison when actually it is about homosexual men in broader Canadian society.

Chapter 2

Internal Dramas of Sexual Subversion: Tremblay's Transvestite Plays

Like the prisoners of Fortune and Men's Eyes, the focal character of Hosanna also creates his identity in reaction to socially-programmed male gender roles. Tremblay's character is continually evolving, in contrast to Herbert's static creations. All of Tremblay's drag queens -- Hosanna, La Duchesse and even Sandra -- experience growth toward the self-awareness Mona already possesses and Queenie will never experience. Tremblay is interested in flux and evolution: he takes Herbert's theme and moves a large step forward in psychological probing.

Some might argue that Tremblay had a greater artistic success with Hosanna than did Herbert with Fortune and Men's Eyes. However, it and the two smaller plays La Duchesse de Langeais and Damnée Manon Sacrée Sandra, have as didactic and expository an intent as Herbert's earlier creation. Tremblay's plays present anguished drag queens, characters that draw initially unsympathetic (if not disgusted) audiences into the reality of their surreal and symbolic existences. Tremblay's treatment of these marginalized, homosexual characters is just as subversive as anything done by Herbert. By the end of each of Tremblay's plays, the reader and audience is forced to empathize with their complex internal struggle with their own

true identities against a hostile society that demands sexual conformity. Equally subversively (though not on a sexual level), Tremblay manages to make these androgynous characters into symbols of Quebec's political and social identity, standing for the very audiences which are initially appalled by them. Thus, they too are political tools, created to fulfill a political program, though the focus is broader than questions of sexual and gender identity.

Though it would initially seem paradoxical, all three of these plays work on two different levels. Neither Hosanna nor the two lead characters of the other plays are fully realistic characters because they are symbols of a broader pattern working within a Quebecois society. While social symbolism is inherent in Herbert's play, here it is neither as integral nor as immediate. In her important treatment of these plays in Michel Tremblay, Renate Usmaini makes the point that "the transvestite [is] both the central symbol of alienation and an embodiment of the crisis of identity." This is an accurate point; however, Usmaini also goes on to say, "we are not dealing with realistic plays, regardless of the sometimes deceptive surface of naturalism" (Usmaini, p. 79). This is an overstatement which denies the real emphasis upon these characters as individuals dealing with the dilemmas of their sexual difference. Though these characters may be metaphors for Québecois alienation, they are much more. These drag queens live in a starkly realistic environment. The drama

vitally depends upon a certain degree of individual realism, since so much of the drama is internal and occurs within the lines of their self-examinations. Each character looks into himself for the meaning of his transvestite identity, his chameleon existence which informs his life as an individual and a symbol. Hosanna and Sandra live the anguished reality of men whose gender and sexual identities which conflict with society's ideal, while they also stand for the schizophrenia of a repressed and oppressed Quebec within Canada.

Manon and Sandra personify the cultural turmoil of Quebec in the 1960's, specifically the waning of religious and secular traditionalism. Indeed, all the cultural forces which have created these identities and anxieties are examined in the Manon/Sandra dichotomy. Specifically, they represent the real psychological struggle that occurred in Quebec at the time of the Quiet Revolution, between Quebec's repressed, self-effacing Catholic, traditional past and its repressed human urges. Equally, Hosanna's mental anguish is as much his as it is Quebec's, as each layer of his identity is an affectation both of what he (symbolically, Quebec) and his environment (on symbolic terms, Canada itself) wants him to be. Neither is truly able to be himself because of the environment that oppresses his inner spirit.

As he takes the opportunity to subvert Canadian political hegemony over the minority of Québecois within the Canadian state, Michel Tremblay makes the equation with the oppression

of another minority -- homosexual men -- within the same society. It is equally subversive for the time, especially as both drag queens in these plays are the focus for a positive future. Despite his objectionable gaudiness taken to the extreme, Sandra stands as the beacon for change, for a freer future against the repression of the straitlaced past which is symbolized by Manon. Indeed, it is Manon herself who is the damned; the "gender fucking" homosexual transvestite Sandra subverts this oppressive damnation in his unabashed fight for personal liberty. Hosanna stands for Quebec society in general, and by the end of that play, the audience looks for Hosanna to come to a better, less troubled understanding of himself so that he, too, may move into the future.

These plays are not overt expressions of a gay male cultural sensibility. The symbolic overtones (which Tremblay takes pains to emphasize) points to a closeted political purpose rather than an open, cultural one. He is not really aiming to help develop gay culture -- if he were, he would not dilute the play's gay significance by the Quebecois cultural metaphor. Rather, behind the screen of his comment on the state of Quebec, he is taking the political step of subtly attempting to legitimize homosexuality within the straight society. Under the surface, though, a few significant things indeed go on. He addresses the gay cultural sensibility of "camp" and he depicts a positive gay male relationship. In Hosanna, the main character's future is validated by the first

real possibility of true love that confronts him. It is through this real expression of genuine, unfiltered feeling that Hosanna is brought back to his own reality, and it is good. The love is subversive, an intolerable assault upon traditional stereotypes of male sexual propriety, yet sanctifying as a beacon of humanity. In this play, Hosanna is "sacrée" through homosexual love.

i.

Hosanna is interesting both for the points of contact with Fortune and Men's Eyes, as well as for the realistic/symbolic form which combines political discourse with a real interest in individual characters. In the case of the character of Hosanna, we see fairly deeply into the passions and insecurities which dominate his emotional cauldron through his dialogue with Cuirette, and through his monologue in Act II. They exchange barbs:

> CUIRETTE: You cocksucker!
> HOSANNA: Watch your language, dear, you're getting vulgar. Since you've been putting on weight you have a tendency to get gross.
>
> Pause
>
> You should be happy .... everything's working out fine .... Aie, take Reynalda on a little honeymoon, why don't you? Then when the fun's over .... if you feel like it ....
>
> Defeated, HOSANNA stops suddenly. Very low.
>
> You're right, it stinks in here. And it's not the perfume either. (p. 52.)

As several passages in his conversation with Cuirette indicate, Hosanna's formerly comfortable environment which had supported his transvestite identity unravels. Under the catalytic pressure of Cuirette he is forced to confront the real facts of his identity, and ultimately to cast off his affectations of womanhood. Cuirette challenges him directly:

> CUIRETTE: If you were a man, you'd act like a man, at least when you're alone. But no, when you're alone, you go on behaving exactly like a woman. You never act like a man when you're near that goddamn mirror. And you sure as hell don't act like a man in bed. [...] You're getting old, Hosanna, you're getting old the way a woman gets old: fast!
> [...]
> CUIRETTE: And you want to know something really stupid?
>
> Pause.
>
> I love you, goddamn it, I love you!
>
> He slams the door behind him. HOSANNA runs to the door and opens it, shouting.
>
> HOSANNA: Well you know, sometimes I'd like to fuck you, Cuirette! Sometimes I'd really like to fuck you! (p. 69)

Cuirette's challenge is ironic. He assault's Hosanna's own internalized conceptions of his own inner maleness (as opposed to his female cover) as a challenge to Hosanna's own personal value. Cuirette emphasizes the facts, that if Hosanna wishes to live as a woman, then he will face not only the problems of womanhood (which is itself denigrated in patriarchal stereotypes of women) but also the inevitable problems of personal denial of pretending to be something he is not.

Hosanna has constructed a life for himself that concretizes the gender stereotype that society creates for homosexual men. Like Queenie's feminized reordering of his gender identity in acting out society's conception of a homosexual as an effeminate pervert, so too does Hosanna recreate himself by renaming himself and going so far as to remain in (stereotypically female and gaudy) makeup at night. What might be a game for the other drag queens (indeed, most drag queens dress as men most of the time and they are not to be confused with transvestites) becomes in Hosanna full-fledged transvestism. The clothes and makeup provide only a visual clue to Hosanna's attempts to become a woman inside and out. By the beginning of the play Hosanna questions this increasingly oppressive desire. The gap between his successful feminized social self and his true inner identity that remains male has placed him into extreme emotional conflict. After Cuirette's challenge at the end of Act I, Hosanna slowly proceeds to remove his clothes and makeup. It is not a direct conflict with society as occurs in Herbert's play, since Tremblay's play underlines Hosanna's voluntary choice in the matter. Both Cuirette and Hosanna are forced to reassess the way they have seen the world in relation to themselves. Hosanna is no longer the "queen" he once was (his own bitchiness is turned against him) and Cuirette's favourite cruising place is irreparably damaged by new lighting. The sexual element of their identities has drastically altered,

and they have to adjust to the real opportunity to change themselves.

Hosanna's social role no longer fits. His role as woman is underscored by the sort of relationship he carries on with Cuirette who is just as affected, but who with his jeans and his swagger affects maleness. By the end of the play the audience can see that Cuirette's role is just as sterile and constricting an affectation as Hosanna's. Ultimately, the time has come for both to realize that they must abandon these roles in order to overcome the misery that plagues them:

> CUIRETTE: You know .... Ah, I can't seem to tell you anything without wanting to shout .... When I was cruising around on the bike a while ago, I was thinking about what you told me .... The important thing is .... jeez, I feel stupid telling you this .... the important thing .... Claude .... it's not Hosanna that I love ....
>
> Silence.
>
> CUIRETTE: Take off your make-up .... go on, take it off ....
>
> HOSANNA gets up and sits down at her make-up table. She removes her wig, and takes off her make-up. She looks at herself in the mirror.
>
> HOSANNA: Cleopatra is dead, and the Parc Lafontaine is all lit up!
>
> She gets up, takes off her underpants, and turns slowly toward Cuirette.
>
> Look, Raymond, I'm a man .... I'm a man, Raymond ... I'm a man. I'm a man .... I'm a man....
>
> RAYMOND gets up, goes toward CLAUDE, and takes him in his arms. (pp. 101-102)

Their bitterness turns to mutual support as they both uncover the truest level of their identities and ultimately, their love for each other.

Like the characters of Mona and Queenie in Fortune and Men's Eyes, Hosanna lives inside the paradoxes of his androgynous identity, exhibiting both the virtues and vices that society would attribute to women and men. Throughout this play, as in Herbert's play before it, the transvestite men are referred to with female pronouns (indeed, the stage notes even refer to Hosanna as "she"), and they are complimented and damned according to the virtues and vices that society attributes to women. Their social interactions are almost entirely negative, in fact. They fight each other and denigrate each other's reputations with a viciousness that far exceeds any female stereotype, while ignoring any stereotypically female virtues beyond the superficial. These transvestites face and hurl such epithets as "bitch" and "whore" and "cunt"; conversely, they are judged (and, especially, judge each other) according to strict codes of dress and physical appearance. They apply their male aggressiveness to become as negatively female as possible. Neither their male selves (which they conceal) nor their self-conscious female identities are allowed to exhibit anything positive. The unseen Sandra in Hosanna epitomizes this negativity, existing within the play only to continue harassing and humiliating Hosanna into the night. It is

precisely this negativity and narrowness that damns Hosanna's place within his community, and (with Sandra's lingering malice) it is the motivating factor in his forced confrontation with his real self.

Hosanna takes the female role, and so like a woman is both valorized and victimized by male society. She is at the bottom of any male power structures, including her relationship with Cuirette. As the male in the relationship, Cuirette is free to come and go and to cheat on his lover. Like a wife, all Hosanna allows himself is to berate the philandering husband. At the same time, within her small society the things that are valued are also stereotypically female: her social status crumbles as her clothes and stylishness pale in against the other queens. Their attack upon him, indeed, is not because of his femaleness, as would be the case among general society, but because of his lack of what the queens perceive as female virtues, specifically his physical appearance. Thus Hosanna is caught in the paradox that all women face: he is obliged by his environment to be as womanly as possible while paying a price in rights and influence.

Though Cuirette remains faithful and loving, the audience's sympathetic focus is on Hosanna, who possesses the real virtue among the play's characters. Ironically, he transcends the world of the drag parties through the traditionally feminine virtues of sensitivity and unrestrained emotional expressiveness. His long monologue (opened and

closed by conversations with Cuirette) is a Socratic dialogue with himself, challenging and uncovering his pretenses and internalized lies. Hosanna says:

> I've got a big mouth and I like to shit on people. I always have and I always will. So what? The ones who get the shit, deserve the shit, every time!
>
> Pause.
>
> That's not true, Hosanna. You shit on people whether they deserve it or not .... anything for a laugh....
> [...]
> Still, I got to be friends with La Duchesse .... during one of her endless fights with Sandra .... and .... Shut up, Hosanna, shut up, everything's finished .... everything's fucked, the whole thing is fucked! (pp. 86-87)

Ultimately and ironically Hosanna exhibits the female sensitivity to realize that in the end, he has been living a destructive lie. At heart, the social role of a woman does not suit him.

While he is caught in this position as neither a man nor a woman, Hosanna, like Queenie in Herbert's play, exhibits much of the vices of both sexes while hiding any of the virtues behind a sarcastic shell. During his monologue, Hosanna says:

> [...] Raymond Bolduc! Chriss, it should be against the law to call yourself Raymond Bolduc!
>
> She looks at herself in the big mirror.
>
> Some people have such ugly names they don't deserve to live. That's why actors and transvestites change their names: because they-don't-deserve-to-live. Cha-cha-cha! A cigarette, a cigarette, my kingdom for a cigarette! (p. 75)

He says he has always been attracted and sexually excited by men, and in moving to the city has attained an identity that reinforces this fact. Hosanna says to Cuirette:

> Me, when I realized the truth .... when I saw that to be queer doesn't just mean that you act like a girl, but can also mean you really want to be a girl, a real girl, and that you can manage to become one ..... Chriss, you can actually manage to become a real girl.... When I realized it was true, that the guys in my school, especially the older ones in the ninth grade .... attracted me [...] But the day I turned sixteen I was on my way to Montreal with the first trick I could lay my hands on. And then .... step by step .... little by little .... I became Hosanna .... Hosanna, the biker's girlfriend! (pp. 60-61)

Even when he discloses his homosexuality to his mother, it is as though she and Hosanna already have a tacit understanding of Hosanna's eventual drag-queen identity. His mother encourages him to find good-looking lovers, just as a woman influenced by female gender stereotypes would likely instruct her daughter. His mother said:"'If that's the way you want to be, Claude, just make sure they're good-looking'" (pp. 60-61). By the time we see him in this play he has crossed the line between the drag queens of the bar to a transvestite who retains his makeup and perfume while in bed with his lover. He lives the camp, vicious stereotypes of homosexual drag queens to the utmost. His downfall is all the more acute because the very viciousness he pushed upon others is turned directly against him, in the terms a drag queen would understand the most. He hides an enormous well of anger and bitterness that comes out in his camp. The anger and bitterness of other drag

queens this time turns against him with equal camp style. Where Hosanna stole for himself the (stereotypical) greatest examples of womanly beauty -- Elizabeth Taylor and Cleopatra -- these things are in turn stolen from him. His very identity and the multiple layers of artifice that his Cleopatra costume represents, is stolen and turned against him in an ultimate example of bitchiness. This is the height of Hosanna's turmoil. The horribly embarrassing event at the bar is the spark which finally forces him to reassess his real identity.

When the fall of Hosanna finally occurs (and the audience senses that it was inevitable, with Hosanna's self-conscious back-biting meanness), the biological man, Hosanna, is not only dressed to create another identity as a woman, but is dressed as a woman pretending to be Elizabeth Taylor who is in turn pretending to be Cleopatra. The layers of pretense are so far out of Hosanna's control (indeed, the events of the evening stray from his control from the beginning) that he is helpless to fight what his environment brings him. He has reached the pinnacle of his artifice, and the real Claude must ultimately escape.

In speaking to Cuirette (who is a genuine confidante, unlike the bitchy Sandra who calls only to rub in Hosanna's embarrassment,) he begins to reveal his true self not only to Cuirette but also to the audience and himself. He thinks more and more about his past and his true identity, and in doing so, his psychological probing of his naked identity is

reinforced by his visual and metaphorical shedding of his layers of costume and makeup. Cuirette is not only Hosanna's confidante but is also a vitally necessary aide for Hosanna to regain his true self. Hosanna needs Cuirette to undo his increasingly constricting dress, to help him find his true body. The remnant of the evening -- as well as Hosanna's former identity -- intrudes only initially in the play (Sandra's harassing calls). By Act II, the evening exists only within Hosanna's mind. The remembered evening is starkly realistic and believable (a trademark characteristic of Tremblay's powerful monologues). The monologue tells as much of the pain of the evening and Hosanna's past as much as the change that occurs within Hosanna's mind as the audience hears him speak. He has voluntarily chosen this life and it is as though he has naturally fallen into it. Yet his memories are almost entirely bitter. All his years of cattiness have been turned back upon him.

The monologue shows Hosanna's mental processes in his attempts to sort out his real identity and the social identity which he has constructed. He is also able to reorder his priorities: unlike the cutting dismissal of Cuirette he made moments before (which was dictated by his female persona, the real Hosanna/Claude is able to see the potential for loss and is unable to avoid facing the possibility. While he sheds his clothes and makeup and perfume, he comes closer and closer to his real self, and realizes with greater and greater intensity

what is truly important to him. Cuirette begins to dominate his thoughts. He says, "I watched Cuirette sleeping. He's beautiful when he's asleep. [...] When I got out [of the bath] I looked like an angel food cake. [...] It was Cuirette who said that." (pp. 86-87) His relief is tangible to the audience when Cuirette faithfully returns, almost as though Hosanna's thoughts of him call him back. By this time of the night, Hosanna has seen his truest feelings -- love for Cuirette -- and is finally able to reject the last vestiges of his artificial self. He declares the truth about himself: "I'm a man .... I'm a man." (p.102)

ii.

It is this remarkably successful application of soliloquy that Hosanna shares with La Duchesse de Langeais (1970). A quick comparison of Hosanna to this short, later play underlines Tremblay's method, as well as his political aim of drawing the character and the audience together. In a manner very similar to that of Herbert, one of Tremblay's central techniques is to overcome the often overt homophobia of the audience by creating a sympathetic bond between these drag queens and the mainstream members of the audience[12]. The drama of the play takes centres in the mind of la Duchesse. The narrator's varied reactions only externally emphasize the emotional impact of la Duchesse's words. This technique does not depend upon visual effects or upon the interactions of

character, remaining integral to the psychology of the single character. (This form will be developed and expanded by later playwrights -- specifically, René-Daniel Dubois -- who delve even more deeply into these emotional complexities.) La Duchesse undergoes emotional turmoil that is remarkably similar to Hosanna. He, too, must fact the facts of his social identity and the restrictions it places upon him. He is perhaps a type of Hosanna who learns only too late about the sterility of his existence. In his case, he has lost his tenuous emotional commitment with a young man, an unfulfilling relationship of the only sort he allows himself. He places himself into the place of a woman, mimicking the female gender role of a heterosexual relationship.

Like Hosanna, La Duchesse is a product of social conditioning, allowing himself to let society create his social identity for him. He is the effeminate heterosexual, like the stereotype, and creates for himself a specifically feminized role for his relationships. He looks for young, closeted, homosexuals who live according to their own narrow interpretations of male gender roles. It is not surprising, then, that the female in the role, la Duchesse, would be victimized by men looking only for a short-term sexual release.

La Duchesse is gaudy and grotesque, and is drunk through the course of that play. However, Tremblay overturns the initial audience hostility toward this character by letting

all of his flaws and frailties rise to the surface. Like Hosanna, la Duchesse is all too human. The connection between the character and the audience then, is clear. These characters ultimately are judged with compassion because it is their essential humanity -- not simply their transvestism or their homosexuality -- that shows through. As with Herbert's portrayal of Smitty, an audience would likely feel most sympathy for la Duchesse's young male lovers: the real flaws or vices lie within them.

iii.

The form of Damnée Manon Sacrée Sandra makes use of this realism, again overlaying it with a highly symbolic level of significance. The lives of Manon and Sandra are placed into extreme relief, with the tawdry, daily details of their lives highlighted to reinforce the contrasts between them. While Sandra often speaks in the most vulgar, sexual language to show her comfort with her part of society, and to reinforce her disdain for the narrow, traditional past of Quebec (which she escapes by fleeing her confining childhood neighborhood), Manon is only too quick to underline her own devotion to that traditionalism with its icons and its obsessiveness. Together, however, they symbolically illustrate the opposing poles of Quebec society. They are complete opposites, yet they coexist with only a vague consciousness of each other's existence. Together they form the foundation of all of Quebec society.

They are placed side by side for the purposes of comparison. Though neither is an appealing choice, the audience is obliged to side eventually with one or the other, both on the human and individual level, but also on the level of the moral choice each offers. Manon is the more familiar subject, as the audience can immediately see, as the common character type of the sanctimonious, religious prude. Since as much as anything she stands for Quebec's past, her character reverberates with imagery of the religious sorts -- priests, nuns, church laypeople -- who dominated Quebec society for centuries. Hers is a wholly negative familiarity, especially at the time of writing the play (around 1977) when the Quebec mainstream had fairly thoroughly cast off the influence of such people. The audience would see Manon as a creature of an embarrassing parochial past, best forgotten.

On a personal, individual level, each character struggles against a society in which they do not fit. The reasons, of course, are completely different. Manon is struggling to hold onto the real source of meaning in her life, however illusory it is, while Sandra simply tries to retain her different social and sexual identity in the face of centuries of traditional Quebec and Western culture that marginalizes her. Manon makes the mistake of equating her religiosity with her passion for Catholic traditionalism and ceremony, an error symbolized by her passion for the largest (crucifix) she can possibly find. She looks to it as a source of transcendence,

as though it lived or were actually an idol. (As Tremblay himself would suggest, Manon speaks "pornographically". She perverts the real meaning of her own religion.) Of course, the sanctification she so desires never comes. It is merely a route for her own escape from a society that has changed and no longer forces a particular moral path. Manon is a pathetically lost soul without inner direction who cannot handle the freedom that modern life in Quebec offers.

The freedom of the new Quebec is not quite enough for Sandra, however, although perhaps society is slowly approaching her needs. She has concluded that traditional conceptions of female gender roles are for her, despite her biological maleness. Her turmoil is found in her real, though unspoken, need for society to accept her openly. The common focus on their childhood neighborhood fundamentally draws these two together. Sandra, of course, cannot find social integration. Her life is too different for her community to accept, and so she lives on its literal margins.

Just as Manon stands for a negative past, Sandra may stand for a future that the audience would also just as soon avoid. "She" affects all the feminine gender traits of Quebec women, to the point where she may be more unselfconsciously feminine than her biologically-female counterpart in Manon. The role-reversal is extreme. She adapts to the female gender role far better than Hosanna or la Duchesse, so well as to ensure extreme discomfort for her society in the play as well as the

audience. Indeed, if it were not admitted, the audience might never guess that Sandra were actually a man. Her obsessions also counterpoint her opposite. While Manon is as yet incapable of transcending the doors of her church and her narrow religiosity, Sandra is just as obsessed with her own vanity, and lies trapped within the narrowness of her shallow existence. What Sandra lacks in comparison to Manon is to her credit, however. Despite an equal obsessiveness, Sandra also displays a deeper and more sensitive humanity. She has none of the self-righteousness of Manon, nor is she so judgmental. Indeed, she demands tolerance and freely offers the same virtue. In sum, she ultimately becomes the far more attractive choice.

Tremblay's attempts to manipulate the audience in this play so that the audience accepts the value of a Sandra over a Manon echoes a familiar tactic he used in both Hosanna and La Duchesse de Langeais. Despite the visual emphasis on the least attractive qualities inherent in these drag queens' subversion of gender, Tremblay underlines the superficiality of sex roles to forcefully emphasize their essential humanity. He challenges any audience antipathy to Sandra by demanding audience agreement in his title, Damnée Manon Sacrée Sandra. By the end of the play, the pious Manon is damned by her sanctimony; the liberal and generous Sandra is sanctified despite the damnation to which tradition would cast her. The title is absolutely subversive, exposing the complete reversal

and subversion of roles and values within his play and within contemporary Quebec society.

The audience sees only a small glimpse into the dramatically highlighted aspects of these lives. Their monologues are carefully edited and sculpted to create Tremblay's ultimate political aim. The shocking conclusion of Damnée Manon emphasizes this fact, taking its level of symbolism one step beyond Hosanna. While the symbolic nature of Hosanna as a figure standing for Quebec's identity crisis is only hinted at, Tremblay dissolves their characters of Sandra and Manon before the eyes of the audience. Ultimately, their symbolic importance is the only thing Tremblay leaves behind. The dichotomy of his heavy reliance upon realism in speech and setting and his subtext of broader symbolic significance is never made more clear.

Thus Tremblay's drag queen plays all work in the same manner to achieve the same psychological effect. Tremblay is as interested in the psychologies of his audience as he is in the minds of his characters. He aims to manipulate the audience's emotional posture toward sexually and socially deviant men to spark a rational reevaluation of them. These social freaks are played up to the fullest to directly and unapologetically challenge the audience's intolerance. Tremblay highlights the reality of their psychological struggle, to face down the audience and to demand a humane

response to these suffering individuals. He has taken sexually subversive men to mainstream audiences, creating characters with enough psychological power to demand respect.

Chapter 3

Innovation and a Gay Sensibility: Dubois and Gilbert

René-Daniel Dubois's Being at Home with Claude (1986) and Sky Gilbert's The Dressing Gown, (1984) share a common focus on male homosexuality, falling in the general thematic traditions of Herbert and Tremblay. What is remarkable is that (unlike their predecessors) these are two openly gay plays. Sky Gilbert has made the distinction between openly gay plays and "closet plays" in his article, explaining the gap between himself and his predecessors (as well as several contemporaries)("Closet Plays", p.55). Where Herbert and Tremblay relied upon the metaphoric inferences of their dramas to camouflage or soften the homosexuality in their texts, neither Gilbert nor Dubois do so. Instead, they directly and unabashedly discuss the social experiences of the gay men of their plays, contributing their works to the development of gay culture on the Canadian stage[13].

Profound differences emerge in the formal approaches of the two plays. Dubois relies heavily upon his Québecois predecessor Tremblay in his formal and dramatic approach, investigating complex questions of male sexuality in a realistic format. Just like Hosanna, Dubois's Yves is forced under intense pressure to reveal his most basic feelings about his sexuality, especially uncovering the negative results of social stigmatization. Dubois manipulates his straight,

mainstream audience into subverting their own homophobia and recognizing their complicity in Yves's demise.

Gilbert, on the other hand, completely ignores any mainstream, heterosexual audience. His aim is also to illustrate the identity problems gay men face, but he wishes to present this to a gay male audience, for the benefit of gay men in understanding themselves. The Dressing Gown, the best known of a large number of plays by Gilbert, is a vast step forward in technique, especially contrasted with the Dubois play. Rather than creating fairly realistic characters and dramatizing their psychologies, Gilbert has created a pastiche of a variety of gay men, who are held together with visual imagery (the dressing gown) and symbolic cues. Together these men create a whole gay male identity in development, illustrating the stages each man goes through in the struggle to accept himself.

The immediate difference in these playwrights' purposes is evident from their different audiences. The Dressing Gown was produced through Gilbert's Buddies in Bad Times theatre. The Rhubarb! and 4-Play festivals (held by Buddies in Bad Times in conjunction with Nightwood theatre), especially, saw significant explosions of original gay and lesbian drama. Dubois's play, on the other hand, was first produced by the Théatre de Quat'Sous which was certainly a more mainstream venue. Even so, in fact they have a closer cultural aim than what would first appear. Gilbert quite consciously contributes

to a developing gay male cultural sensibility, illustrating a postmodern detachment from traditions of linearity and narrative to create a play that is detached from the mainstream in its cultural place. He writes plays for gay culture, not straight culture, and thus takes a great political leap forward from Tremblay and Herbert. While the two earlier playwrights took the openly political stance of confronting heterosexual, homophobic sensibilities, they presented characters who remained under the overweening cultural control of the mainstream society which degrades and marginalizes them. Gilbert largely ignores the straight milieu to create a work that centres around gay culture itself. Where Tremblay took marginalized characters and dramatized them, Gilbert takes marginalized characters and makes them the centre of an entirely new culture. (He also ignores the possibility of a straight audience. He validates the experience of his socially-marginal gay characters by writing a play about them; he validates his socially-marginal gay audience by writing a play for them.) Thus he makes every attempt to escape mainstream, straight form and technique. Dubois is also contributing to gay male culture, however. Though his play was presented to straight audiences, Being at Home with Claude focused on a realistically-presented, openly gay man. The non-gay characters, like the Inspector, are superficial and ultimately negative. It is an intense investigation into everyday gay male experiences (with the

central exception of the killing) in a sketchily-drawn (and by implication, distant) straight, mainstream society.

Gilbert and Dubois contrast in the development of their characters. Dubois's Yves indeed realizes his self-delusion and the real control society has had over his life. However, Being at Home with Claude is really only a small snapshot of a tightly circumscribed, intense period in the man's life. He undergoes a single epiphany (at the same time providing one for the audience), and then the play ends. The Dressing Gown, conversely, takes snapshots of a variety of individuals who undergo no real revelations. Instead, each character taken on his own (except Tim, of course) is completely static, showing an unchanging state of mind. Taken together, however, these characters are stages in the mindset of a single individual, and the growth is enormous. The play moves from a sexless child to a masochistic punk to a mature and self-assured gay man. In this respect, the plays could not be more different.

Gilbert's unique significance is in his technical sophistication. His multi-layered approach which emphasizes the unifying, symbolic dressing gown and draws a single different character from one scene to the next, echoes the earliest examples of English drama such as Everyman, as well as Arthur Schnitzler's La Ronde (or, Reigen) (1896) which also deals with sexual politics[14]. Gilbert's characters are not particularly psychologically insightful, certainly not to the level of Dubois, but his technique is vastly superior to his

counterpart's linearity, anticipating further developments in Fraser's play which comes five years later. Gilbert uses all the possibilities of the stage to make a message that reverberates on rational and surreal levels, intimately connecting with his gay audience to show them a play by and about their own experiences. The initial superficiality of his characters makes them more universal, making each scene and experience significant in the montage that is the socialization of the gay male.

i

Dubois' Being at Home with Claude draws heavily upon his Québecois predecessor both in form and theme. The play is very much like Hosanna in two distinct ways: "Him" (Yves) powerfully relives an emotional epiphany in his life, and this epiphany uncovers the vital facts of his homosexual identity in relation to homophobic and hostile social structures. His memories come to the surface in a dialogue even more intense than the battle of wills between Hosanna and Cuirette. Ultimately, a lengthy soliloquy reveals the vital and destructive facts of his life in the society.

While Hosanna points his anger through sarcasm and bitterness toward Cuirette and other drag queens, the queen also internalizes the social hostility against his homosexuality into transvestism. Yves suffers the same social hostility, but he directs it outward in a destructive and

paradoxically defiant act of aggression against his lover. With Claude, as Hosanna with Cuirette, Yves experiences the beauty of his love which society condemns. Unlike Hosanna, he feels that he cannot live with that love and express it publicly without fear of recrimination. He realizes that all his lovers will never integrate him into their outside lives and experiences, even Claude. Indeed, Yves is aware enough of the social dicta against homosexuality that he too will never be able to express the beauty of his love to his family or his friends. His love -- the thing which Yves has come to value above all else -- must remain hidden as something dirty and shameful. He is victimized by society by being forced to repress himself regarding the thing he holds dear.

The result is that he kills his lover. The death is the ultimate symbol of social destructiveness against homosexuals, yet it also symbolizes a real defiance of the social structures that oppress his love. In killing Claude, Yves realizes that he has another option rather than simply accepting society's negativity toward his feelings. He can kill Claude and defy society's demands for silence. He says,

> I knew we'd never be able to walk outta that apartment like nothing happened. We couldn't, shouldn't. We shouldn't even try to act like nothin' happened. ... And we couldn't relive what was happening then, just a few minutes a month, and spend the rest of the time dealing with everyone else. So all I remember is, suddenly I had the steak knife in my hand. ... (p. 57)

He refused to let the beauty of their moment be tarnished by interludes of lies and silence. So, Claude chose to end it in its height of beauty and perfection.

Like Hosanna's ultimate cry for love with Cuirette (and even like Mona's ache for real love with Smitty) Yves has taken a step that demands homosexual love, more than simple homosexual sex. He is denied his possibility for love by a society which constricts male sexuality and emotions to heterosexual experience. In reaction, he takes the ultimate act of subversion against this male social/sexual pattern, protecting and expressing his true love against society by ending it. He protects his lover by ending his life while it was still good: "... he died of pleasure. Without seeing his life go to ratshit." (Dubois, p. 58)

That this was also a destructive act, caused by society's intolerance of male sexual deviance, is what Yves finally realizes, and this is what the audience is ultimately left with. His final words are,

> The second one who picked me up, in the square ... I thought about my sister ... I knew I had to call you, cause just the thought of ... rotting ... I give up. (p. 58)

Just as society's intolerance of deviation from its norms has destroyed the lives of the men in Fortune and Men's Eyes and as it threatened Hosanna, Yves ultimately realizes that he has expressed society's hatred of homosexuality by his own hand.

Dubois also manipulates the audience's affections and moral direction in a way that evokes both Tremblay and

Herbert. The Inspector looks upon Yves's experience from the outside. He is like the heterosexual audience peering into a completely foreign subculture[15]. Against the resistance of Yves, the Inspector is forced to pry with extreme effort into this subculture. In the same manner, is might take an enormous leap of understanding for the mainstream, middle-class audience to conceptualize and understand Yves's struggle. The initial sympathies of the audience would surely fall upon the Inspector, as he is, in effect, its surrogate. As a policeman, he is a part of the status quo. He is also heterosexual, looking at Yves from the same distance of experience as the audience.

Ultimately, however, the emotional power of Yves's soliloquies move the sympathy of the Inspector, and, by extension, the audience. Despite his difference, the Inspector realizes that Yves's act of murder was an act of love and defiance against a system that focuses its repression upon his basic need for love and companionship. The Inspector realizes his complicity in this oppression. Yves is oppressed by the structural homophobia of the society, and the Inspector is intimately tied to the organization of that society. Just as the audience sympathizes with the Inspector, they too must also realize their own complicity in Yves' struggle. They are just as much a part of the oppressive mainstream culture.

One cannot escape the fact that Being at Home with Claude was first produced at a mainstream theatre and "at Théatre de

Rideau Vert, a well-established mainstream house, in the spring of 1988" (Wallace, Producing Marginality, p.205). In that situation, the political purpose of relating Yves's destruction at the hands of straight society would be to overturn mainstream homophobia in the audience. Unlike Tremblay and Herbert who have the same purpose, Dubois might also have had the intention of creating a play as a contribution to gay culture. A reading of Being at Home with Claude reveals a few insightful facts in this regard. Yves, the gay man, and his experience are the only fully developed aspects of the play. The heterosexual Inspector, although a crucial character, is superficial, at best. The Inspector's background and life are unexpressed, while those of Yves are detailed. Further, it is easy to see that a gay male audience would easily identify with Yves instead of with the Inspector. Before the truth is revealed, Yves seems an ordinary and unremarkable gay man. He is realistic, sympathetically portrayed and easy to identify with. In sum, the play could be read in the same manner as Gilbert's. It is an illustration of gay experiences from the inside out, detailing gay life (and the social root of its problems) for the benefit and education of gay men.

ii.

The Dressing Gown discusses male homosexuality equally directly. Robert Wallace says,

> Buddies is more accountable to its audience than most companies working in English-Canadian theatre -- if only because it knows who this audience is. The company wins the support of its public by creating original work that speaks to the lives and imaginations of lesbians and gay men; rather than give its audience something to which it has been accustomed, Buddies gives it something different -- something it can see nowhere else. Often this leads the company into the controversial area of political art." (Wallace, Producing Marginality, p. 34)

Indeed, the array of gay male characters suggests that Gilbert is consciously portraying a broad spectrum of gay male experiences and character types, to create a clearinghouse of the different social and personal experiences of gay men[16]. Tim's grandfather gives the young Tim a mystical dressing gown, which is systematically passed (usually in sexual encounters) from one gay man to the next, ultimately winding up again in the hands of a mature Tim. Each sexually-charged encounter is done as effectively and unapologetically as possible, a fact which suggests a more specific purpose behind the play. Gilbert is portraying gay life and the social development of gay men to a gay male audience. Unlike the other playwrights who address similar themes -- including Dubois -- here Gilbert is addressing a small, interested group through his Buddies in Bad Times theatre company, presenting gay lifestyles to gay men. Gilbert is undoubtedly the first significant English-Canadian playwright to dramatize the range of gay life with such directness and in such a representative way. Further, of all these plays, The Dressing Gown puts the greatest emphasis upon pure theatricality.

Beginning with the adolescent Tim and tracking the transfer of the symbolic dressing gown from man to man, Gilbert is showing the range of possibilities for gay men to live their lives. He addresses each recognizable lifestyle, from sadomasochism to "open" relationships. He portrays juvenile homosexual experiences and mature, loving relations. As such, his initial social purpose is obvious: to address gay men directly and sympathetically on the entire range of gay male experiences.

The play also works on an entirely individual, character-centred level. Each person exists in a struggle between his own, inner identity and the social milieu around him. Each person is (by degree) a product of the social environment, and Gilbert's evaluation relates directly to the ability of that person to escape male sexual/social roles. Each man lives surrounded by a social atmosphere that very specifically categorizes gay men, and several have, indeed, fit their lives into one of society's niches for them.

The sadomasochist Larry, for example, comes across as extremely negative, expressing anger and hostility against society through physical aggression. His life evokes the same pattern of repressed and violent men exemplified already by Rocky in Fortune and Men's Eyes and, in the next chapter, by Bernie in Unidentified Human Remains. None of these men has fundamentally accepted his own homosexuality, despite the clear homosexual desires and actions that merge with their

frustration and anger into sexual/physical brutality. At the same time, they are also living according to a specific social stereotype that categorizes a large proportion of gay men as sexual sadists. To make up for the social stigma of their homosexuality, they overcompensate with masculine aggression taken to the extreme[17].

The masochistic character of Jim best expresses the same self-destructive hostility against his own homosexual social identity. To Jim, the sadomasochism is a dangerous game which he plays to make his self-hatred tangible, almost to the point of suicide. He is not disturbed by his homosexual desires and actions themselves; as he says, he is a man driven by his sexual desire and his attraction to other men. He says to Martha:

> JIM: Well I mean he likes to fuck for hours right? I've never met anybody who could, like, fuck me for an hour and a half and not come.
>
> MARTHA: I see (pause) So your relationship is purely sexual.
>
> JIM: Oh yeah. God yes. Do you think I'd be caught dead walking down the street with a fucking banker? (p.63)[18]

At the same time, the older Eliot has an even deeper insight into what drives men like Jim:

> ELIOT: For some reason, in our particular society, to be a man is to be hard, is to win; it's to be a fighter, and quite often, a killer.
>
> MARTHA: But not all men are like that, inside.
>
> ELIOT: I don't think they are but I think society pushes men to be that way. [...] We do our best, we men, trapped sometimes in being strong and quote,

> unquote male. And sometimes we end up in hospitals because of it. (pause)
> (pp. 71 & 73)

Jim is overcompensating for the social stigma of homosexuality by creating another social identity, one that imposes and receives extreme macho violence[19].

Indeed, Eliot implies that all gay men seem to share a similar experience in the matter. He says, "I often used to feel guilty because I wasn't 'manly' enough." (p. 72) This is in itself an intellectualized understanding of the basic and childish impulse against the social stigma of homosexuality that David violently expresses in the first act, when he tries and fails to get Tim to forget their shared sexual experience. He explodes with frustrated anger:

> I told you I'm not doing that fag stuff any more. I'm no fag. [...] What the fuck are you trying to do? Get arrested? I'm telling you I'm going to punch you out if you act like this stupid little fag Tim. I mean, are you fucking gay or what? (p. 19)

They perceive their homosexuality to be a fundamental social transgression that threatens their position as men. This fear expresses itself in anger and violence, whether directed inside or out.

The sadomasochists in gay society exist and their lifestyle is shown with brutal and direct honesty. They are victimized by the social role ascribed to gay men by general Canadian society, and are incapable of running against that role. This is not an explosion of angry and repressed bitterness, as we will see illustrated by Bernie in Human

Remains. Rather, men like Barry are more like Herbert's Rocky, since they express their need to be respected as males by using stereotypical and extreme male violence. They are denied that respect by the stigma of their homosexuality, turning that victimization into violence against themselves and others, thus expressing through physical aggression the social suffering they believe that they endure. As such, they stand in the midpoint in the development of a mature gay male psychology, one that must ultimately accept homosexuality and validate a real identity.

When all the characters of the play are taken as a whole, the audience can see one gay identity developing throughout all of it. Each new character is -- more or less -- a step in each stage of personal development, a stage toward the maturity that comes with a real belief in individual self-worth as a gay and fulfilled man. It is no coincidence, then, that these sadomasochistic figures are placed in the middle of the play: the first act opens with a young, sexually inexperienced boy who begins to express his own desires, and it ends with a mature, healthy gay man. In between are years of self-doubt, self-hatred and misery as these gay persons slowly break free from social convention to assert their own personal value. The dressing gown charts this course, from one individual to the next.

After a remarkable series of exchanges, the dressing gown winds up in the hands of its rightful owner, the mature man

who has finally accepted himself as a positive human being. Each character's attitude toward the mystical gown illustrates his individual moral state. The gown was a gift of love to Tim from his grandfather (that is, from one man to another) and it takes on the significance of a mystical, semi-transcendent symbol of male love. As such, it symbolizes the abilities to love by the men who possess it. The men who discard or throw around the gown still have years of growing and learning to do, and indeed, the insecure young Tim throws it away in a fit of boyish pique. Visually, the gown radiates the self-image of the person who possesses or wears it. When its owner has a low self-image, it is dull and dead; when a man loves himself, it glows with positive energy. It works as a continuous visual symbol that charts the gay male social development from insecurity to self-acceptance.

The dressing gown weaves together the various individual and unrelated men who come across it, pulling them together according to their relative conceptions of their own self-worth. The degree of self-worth rises inevitably to a final redemption of the gown as a symbol for the human spirit, a struggle wherein lies this drama. While these are all individual and remarkably dissimilar men, the gown draws together their common struggles with their identities and self-esteem to create a universalized experience of homosexual men. They all undergo the range of experiences of conflict with society and their individual conceptions of self-worth

and identity. They all struggle with boyish anger against the position their subversive sexuality places them. In terms of repression and hate, all express the chasm between their individual self-conceptions and their ideal social role. Gilbert's message is universalized, and so too is his hopeful and redemptive climax to the play. All homosexual men must ideally grow to accept themselves with happiness and love.

Gilbert's play is furthest from his predecessors Tremblay and Herbert in his method of presentation as well as in his audience's background[20]. The fairly realistic and linear dialogue and characterization of the earlier plays is completely foregone in The Dressing Gown, replaced by a surreal montage of discrete images and scenes, held together through symbol and metaphor. The characters of the play -- even the central Tim -- are as much memory/dream image as they are realistic. Specific aspects of each character are brought to the forefront without any attempt at broadening a specific characterization to make it full and real. The vignette of David and Steven, for example, illustrates David's first mature homosexual experience in tangent with his self-doubt and homophobia:

> DAVID: Whew... you're some hot chick... you don't need tits - hey - (discovers her sex) Hey what the - what the fuck is - hey -
>
> STEVEN: What's the matter.
>
> DAVID: You know what the fuck is the matter.
>
> [...]
>
> DAVID: What is this - some kind of joke?
>
> [...]

DAVID: I can't fuck you... you're a guy -

[...]

DAVID: This is weird -

STEVEN: Weird things can be fun too... now come on -

DAVID: (entering him in the dark) Oh oh... oh.

STEVEN: There, isn't that nice?

DAVID: Oh, yeah... (pp. 30-31)

It is an impressionistic technique that focuses intimately upon this sole interaction, using the sounds of their voices and the sequence of short visual images interrupted by periods of black, with voices calling out to intensify the experience and to highlight David's emotional confusion. Even though it is realistic enough dialogue to seem familiar and natural, this method stands as something clearly distinct from the approach of Gilbert's predecessors.

Unlike the earlier plays, and even unlike the later Fraser, characters are truly secondary to the visual imagery, the layering of one image/scene upon another. Surely members of the gay male audience may catch fleeting glimpses of familiar characters or situations, but each situation is extremely short, and each follows the next in quick succession. Audiences get only a hint of Barry's shallowness and manipulation in his conversation with Steven; Larry's moral vacuity is best illustrated by his casual near-poisoning of his lover, Jim. Audiences see no more of these characters but these scenes speak volumes for the mentalities they represent. With the gay male audience in mind, the surrealist

approach of the play becomes readily apparent. Each scene, each character type calls to something familiar in the audience, to spark a sense of connectedness and relevance, but not so long as to allow a conscious rationalization. Each scene builds upon the familiarity of the next (with stereotypes playing a useful role beyond social comment) to mimic the sort of pastiche of memories that each mature gay man in the audience would possess as he remembers fleeting and disconnected events in his past as he accepted his identity.

Thus the relevance of the play's intended audience becomes even more important: this is a message that calls to the common experience of the audience of gay men. The play heightens the memories of each audience member, and while doing so makes an important political message. It calls to the familiar and unrecognized images of gay male personal development, yet inherent in these images is a real consciousness of the conflict between inner conceptions of identity and socially-constructed sex roles. David initially rejects himself because of the social castigation against homosexual men, while the sadomasochists express their repression through violence in a common pattern that reflects negative social conditioning. The negative and destructive role of patriarchal society's narrow social category for male identity is highlighted in each case. The young David attacks Tim for his social and sexual subversion, assuming a destructive and homophobic heterosexual "normal" male

identity. Larry and Jim cast off their real identities to play a macho, violent sex game. Even Eliot feels uncomfortable with his inability to live according to his prescribed gender role of masculinity. In sum, Gilbert is telling his audiences that the problems and difficulties they all face results from a mismatch of their inner reality as men with different sexualities and the male role society has constructed for them. All the blame is placed at the feet of society:

> MARTHA: But isn't it just cultural conditioning that -
>
> ELIOT: That's what I'm saying you see: it very may well be. (p. 72)

Like Eliot and the mature Tim, the man who accepts himself despite social stigma or the disapproval of others is the man who is a beacon for other gay men to follow.

Gilbert also addresses transsexuality, anticipating Don Hannah's character of Alex. Steve is probably included in Gilbert's discussion simply because he wished to address the many individual possibilities for the lives of gay men. In comparison to Alex, however, in Steve a few different elements of transsexuality emerge. In Gilbert's character the connection between his homosexuality and transsexuality is essential. He is both a man who desires other men, as well as a man who wants to become a woman. Barry's anger against Steve makes an interesting point on the matter, since it underlines the gap between the sexual and social differences of men and women. Unlike Alex, Steve likely wants to attain the female

gender role as a result of his sexual desire for men. (Barry's hostility, therefore, reflects his hostility to the feminine.) Steve is like Herbert's Mona taken to an extreme limit, taking his appreciation for feminine gender roles to the point of altering his biological sex. Where other gay men are inspired by their homosexuality to address their female virtues (like Fraser's David), Steve has gone to the point of wanting to be one. He stands on the extreme end of Gilbert's gay male continuum.

The climax of the play demands an emotional contact between the audience and the mature Tim. When this man is revealed to be the boy at the beginning of the play, all the significance of the different episodes falls together as stages of his own development. At the same time, the range of experience portrayed by all the characters is deliberately universalizing. Each member of the audience will probably identify with at least a few of them, drawing themselves together with Tim. To the audience, the significance of the play therefore lies in its real relevance to them. Unlike so many plays of the past, including the landmarks by Herbert and Tremblay, this play speaks to their own experience from within their own community. It is a theatrical and political revolution.

Overall, each playwright fills in the gap between the first Canadian playwrights to take on the theme of subversive

male sexuality and the playwrights who take the theme to yet another level of significance. Dubois and Gilbert take different yet complementary steps toward that final goal. While Dubois's play follows in the general form of Tremblay's Hosanna, he does not depend upon social metaphors to detract from his discussion of gay male experience. Dubois's interest is psychological, investigating the gay male psyche to a depth that Tremblay and Herbert never attained, and his description of Yves's emotional struggle is profoundly affecting. Thus he sets the stage for further psychological investigation in Don Hannah's play, and especially in Fraser's Human Remains. However, he has not taken the step of directly and solely addressing a gay male audience. His play may be perceived in two different ways, depending on the orientation and outlook of his audience. Straight audiences will be led into the gay underworld, guided by the Inspector. Gay audiences will see the destruction to their own world when it meets the broader world of the Inspector.

Gilbert dispenses with the possibility of two distinct audiences, directly and unequivocally addressing gay men. Gay people undoubtedly comprise the main audience of his Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, and The Dressing Gown speaks to gay men directly, in the visual terms they alone relate to. His sadomasochists, drag queens and others are not repulsive but familiar, comprising parts of the gay male culture that affects his audience. On the surface, these plays have

remarkably different techniques to attain a similar end. In reality, both may address a gay audience in the same manner, investigating and dramatizing gut-wrenching scenes from their common social and cultural experiences.

Chapter 4

Integration and Maturity in Fraser and Hannah

While Gilbert's play certainly pushes forward the boundaries of theatrical representation of this theme, The Dressing Gown takes only the first step in a real revolution in the theme of subversive male sexuality. Though he took his play away from attempts at mainstream acceptance of different male gender roles (homosexuality, specifically), he still maintained the broadly political purpose of detailing the experience of male individuals with self-identities that conflict with social roles. Brad Fraser and Don Hannah made the furthest leaps in developing this theme, however, in their plays The Wedding Script and Unidentified Human Remains. Rather than simply creating political didacticism, these playwrights have integrated their equally political message about the subversive male in a hostile society in a dramatic framework that includes a wide array of other personal and social questions. In The Wedding Script, Alex, a transsexual, is the sympathetic focus of a group of people who deal with a complex of questions of love, monogamy and commitment, and the basic concept of marriage which traditionally implies these things. The sexually different character is fully integrated into their social microcosm while the other characters' acceptance of Alex, and the social tolerance this implies, is

broadened into call for the same social tolerance of other equally different emotional realities.

Brad Fraser also integrates other personal and social questions into his dramatization of subversive male sexuality within a hostile society. For Fraser, male sexuality itself implies a broad range of other emotional experiences, from hatred to loneliness and the need for emotional commitment. On the surface, this play is less political than simply psychological. Fraser is interested in dramatizing a wide range of individual experiences, to discover how they interact and effect each other on a psychological level. David's emotional malaise, for example, sparks the other characters into a forced reevaluation of their social and sexual identities, and all the characters attempt to bridge the gap between their social realities and their inner moral ideal. Sexuality is merely the base for an entire range of emotional and psychological experiences.

Fraser also broadens his attempt on the level of drama/audience interaction. While Human Remains is fundamentally about psychologies in flux against society, it is also a mainstream murder mystery. The drama of Bernie's murders has all the necessary devices to carry along the plot and to engross the audience's attention. Thus while Hannah integrates male sex roles into his theme of psychology and society, Fraser goes a step further in integrating his

psychological theme into the entirely different genre of murder mystery.

Both take the entirely political step of integrating men of different and unusual sexual identities into wider and more mainstream dramas. Taken out of context, characterizations like Alex and David would appear to be as baldly political as anything by Tremblay or Gilbert. However, Alex and David are only individual characters within the milieu of other, often conventional characters. The didactic intent of these characters, and their problems of facing their socially-mandated gender roles, is thus only a part of a complex of psychological and dramatic workings. Indeed, the most political aspect of characters like David and Alex is in their actual inclusion within these plays. Hannah and Fraser manipulate and challenge their audiences by unequivocally illustrating that transsexuals and homosexuals should not be marginalized as freaks but are legitimate subjects for study in any thorough investigation into psychology and society. Herbert's and Tremblay's shocking political spectacles are brought out of the corners and into the mainstream.

The development of the themes of homosexuality and subversive male sexuality have led Fraser and Hannah to these ultimate expressions of their comfort with the topic. Here, straight and gay men and women are fully integrated in microcosms of Canadian society. Other, earlier playwrights clearly alluded to this point, with characters (like Herbert's

Smitty) who bridge the gap between mainstream and subversive, gay and straight. Hannah and Fraser are unique because of the completeness with which they merge subversive sexualities into heterosexual, mainstream situations.

i.

Fraser focuses fundamentally upon individual characters interacting against society. Indeed, his characters share the same problems in integrating their personal desires with their socially-programmed sex roles. As the focus, David's personal problems are the catalyst for all the personal conflicts of the others. He has cast a distinct role for himself within society, a role which is as much due to his inner reality as it is to social conditioning. As a gay man, he believes it is his destiny to live a promiscuous and unfulfilled life. This necessary reality is further reinforced by his unconsummated love for Bernie. David believes that Bernie is straight, a fact that permanently impedes a loving and sexual relationship between them. He has repressed his desires into bitterness and total emotional closure. Two conditions -- meeting Kane and experiencing Bernie's psychotic decline -- combine to force David to reevaluate the despairing identity he has created for himself. All his feelings are dragged to the surface, and he has to reassess his life.

When the audience meets David, his life is lived from one unemotional sexual encounter to the next. He says, "It's all

the same. Everything's the same. I go to the club - the music's the same. The faces are all the same..." (p. 12). He has rejected the possibility of real love in favour of shallow and faceless sex. He recounts his latest encounter that evening:

> DAVID: Later I walk home.
> [JERRI: The streets are empty.]
> Pissed to the tits. Some car follows me down Jasper Avenue. I give up in front of a Mac's store and stop - get into the car.
> [BENITA: Mutilated.]
> He drives for a while then pulls into a parking lot by the parliament buildings and sucks me off. I shoot into his mouth and he swallows it. He's crazy. (p. 12)

He lives the life of a gay loner, existing for nothing but sex without commitment. He lives by his own stereotype of the self-destructive gay man.

Whether this stereotype is actually the expression of his real inner desires is questioned early in the play. Indeed, he affects two stereotypes at once: he is the promiscuous gay man as well as the hard and emotionally-independent male, the emotional role that society demands for all men. Under pressure from his roommate, Candy, who observes, "Deep down you want someone to be special for you," a more complex inner reality pokes through the surface. He answers Candy's jibes:

> DAVID: I'm quite capable of being special for myself. What you're talking about doesn't exist Candy. (p. 24)

Candy challenges David on his relationship with Bernie, and the sensitivity of David's position is laid bare. She says,

> CANDY: Do you love him?

DAVID: (brief hesitation) He's my friend. (p. 25)

The hesitation speaks volumes for his unspoken desires. He then remembers his camping trip, a cold night where he has tried to screw up the courage to tell Bernie that he loves him. But, he decides, "It's too hard" (p. 43). David has loved Bernie for years, but always he has been unable to express that love. Bernie created an identity for himself as straight, and even married. The result was that David became cold and bitter, unable to allow himself the risk of feeling love again. He allows himself only meaningless sex.

When love comes closer and closer to David's life in the person of Kane (indeed, Benita reveals to David that Kane loves him, p. 36), it is a challenge to David's basic ideas of himself. As an irrational response to the challenge, David takes greater risks with his personal safety. He cruises the parks for cheap sex, all the time very conscious of the danger. He still represses his true feelings, his long-unfilled desire for love, and this repression makes itself concrete under this pressure. He brings himself closer and closer to self-destruction:

> DAVID: It's warm. I start thinking about Victoria Park and even though I tell myself that I won't go -- that it's scary and it's dangerous -- I know I will. (p. 40)

David is like the masochist Jim of The Dressing Gown, facing danger to escape his reality. When Candy asks, "Why don't they ever find men raped and mutilated?" David responds, "Men don't complain about it" (p. 37). This passage immediately precedes

the scenes of David risking his life, and the connection to him is clear. He is escaping the terrifying possibilities of love, to reinforce his (stereotypically male) sense of himself as cold and self-reliant.

Later in the play, David and Candy expose each other's loneliness, and they see in each other's experience their own pain and struggle. They taunt each other:

> CANDY: Do you ever get tired of being a professional faggot?
> [...]
> CANDY: You're a loser David. You turn everything into a joke so you don't have to face what a fuck up you are.
>
> DAVID: I don't think we should do this right now.
>
> CANDY: You have nothing and no one in your life.
> [...]
> CANDY: You have nothing!
>
> DAVID: Neither do you!
>
> CANDY: At least I'm not afraid to try. (pp. 64-65.)

This is the crucial point in their own relationship. Moreover, from this point David faces real possibilities for true love, rather than just sex. At the end of Act One, Bernie says, " I love you David." (p. 67). When he is terrified by Bernie's now-obvious psychosis, David demands Kane's companionship and support:

> DAVID: Hold my hand.
> [...]
> KANE: Why?
>
> DAVID: Because it's important someone hold my hand right now.
> (pp. 75-76)

David engages Kane in a game of danger and trust, asking the young man to risk falling from a rooftop, to prove his trust in him. As such, David is openly demanding an emotional commitment from Kane. He has progressed a great distance from his initial, cold self. He is experimenting with love and commitment.

The structural climax of the play happens at David's highest point of emotional trauma. Fundamental changes occur in his relationship with Bernie. The men have sex, they express their long-repressed love for each other, and Bernie dies. These events merge in David's mind, and together they relieve him of his long-held bitterness. This chapter of his life has closed, and (with Kane) he has finally opened up to let himself again experience true love. It is a sad, yet triumphant ending: after a profound and violent catharsis, he is finally able to find the happiness and contentment he lacked for years.

Unidentified Human Remains intersects with Hosanna through the character of David. The focal character of each play (David and Hosanna) has created an affected and self-delusive identity chiefly characterized by (typically male) emotional coldness. David's role as gay cruiser and Hosanna's as drag queen are equally bitter, sarcastic and closed. Both characters experience a key combination of events and an emotional crisis that sparks a thorough re-evaluation of their identities. They end with their delusions shed in favour of

greater inner emotional truth. They approach their true selves, characterized by typically female virtues of emotional expressiveness and vulnerability, and, especially, a will to love. This is where the real sexual subversion lies. Even though these characters were self-consciously subversive in their artificial identities, they were still emotionally male. Their inner truths paradoxically reveal an affinity toward the femaleness and female virtues within their male bodies. These plays' valorization of such feelings stands as the ultimate emotional subversion of the male gender script.

Each supporting character in Human Remains undergoes a challenge to his or her self-conceptions of sexual role and sexual orientation. A chain reaction occurs in which an entire group of people is forced to re-evaluate its sexual desires and feelings. David's homosexuality spurs Candy to look for different sexual possibilities for herself, to overcome her own failed attempts at relationships with the opposite sex (including David at an earlier time in their lives). Indeed, David's sexual openness is also the spur that stimulates Bernie to express his repressed sexual desires that had earlier expressed themselves in anger and extreme violence. Finally, Kane's strong attraction to David forces his true desires to the surface. They are all in a state of flux.

Apart from David, Candy is the most interesting character. Indeed, although it may show a more superficial analysis, her struggle with her own desires mirrors that of David. At the

beginning of the play, Candy and David compare the relative success of their respective evenings. The evening of each typifies the overall way both have been living their lives. When David returns home from his sexually-charged activity, Candy compares his experience against her own sexless, stay-at-home existence. Her obsession with the futon shows how far her life has devolved:

> DAVID: I worry about you darling - you need to get out more - sleep around a bit.
>
> CANDY: With the men in this town? You're joking.
>
> [...]
>
> CANDY: I need someone who'll hang around for my orgasm.
>
> DAVID: Then stop dating straight men.
>
> CANDY: Maybe I'd have more luck with women. (p. 13)

David's influence sparks her urge to reevaluate her sexual orientation and the life she has led as a result of it. While she is the first character to undergo the struggle, unfortunately for Candy, David's prescription is ultimately just as unfulfilling as his own sexually-obsessed existence. David does not point Candy in the direction of a loving relationship (what she really needs) but rather in his direction of casual and empty sexual escapades.

The trauma Candy undergoes with the lesbian Jerri proves the error of David's advice as well as reinforcing the fact of Candy's heterosexuality. Candy has in fact made an ironic and vital mistake: she found exactly what she needed (a potential life partner) in someone who was the wrong sex. When Candy

overcompensates for the sexual identity crisis her relationship with Jerri has caused, she turns to the aggressive and macho Robert, who exemplifies the core of what is wrong with self-consciously male heterosexual men in society. In reaction to her brush with a negative way of viewing lesbianism, Candy turns to an incarnation of social correctness in an extremely male Robert, reaffirming her sense of her own identity in a relationship with him, even to the point of contemplating marriage.

What Candy truly needs is not an affirmation nor a rejection of her social role as a marriagable woman nor a complete reversal of her sexual orientation, but rather a fulfilling and supportive relationship with a man. She finds that this is what she has had all along. The sexual element is not so overwhelmingly necessary in her life as it is with David and she finds (at least temporary) contentment with him in a close and platonic relationship[21].She is back to where she started, but by the end she expresses none of the loneliness or despair of before.

Kane's experience in the play follows a fairly standard coming-out-of-the-closet process, but this too underlines Fraser's subversive message. Unlike Gilbert's play, Human Remains has always been produced for general, mainstream audiences. Presumably, many younger members of such an audience would focus their sympathies upon Kane as (at first) the most "normal" person in the play. Like Herbert's Smitty,

his experiences draw a great deal of attention from straight audiences. By first identifying with him, they more closely experience his "coming out", looking at it with sympathy. Just as David and Candy ultimately achieve an unorthodox kind of happiness that breaks social traditions, so too does Kane subvert the traditional male concepts of male sexual identity to find his particular place. Audiences follow his trials with David, and sympathetically affirm the (hopefully) positive changes he has made, from unhappy and lonely affectations of straightness to contentment in a love relationship with another man. Thus members of mainstream society are instructed in personal terms about the personal, emotional meaning of accepting one's own subversive sexuality.

Like the Rocky character of Herbert's play, Bernie is a man whose repressed homosexual urges express themselves in physical violence. Like Kane, he initially appears to be "straight" and (in that sense) normal, yet from the early stages of the play, this self-delusive repression is self-evident. When he (platonically) sleeps with David, the truth is jokingly revealed in their banter:

> DAVID: (cutting him off.) Keep it up and I'm gonna start demanding sexual favors in return.
>
> BERNIE: I'm yours. Anything you want.
>
> DAVID: (Reaching under the covers and groping BERNIE.) Anything?
>
> BERNIE: Cut it out! (Laughs and jumps out of bed.) Asshole!

DAVID: I'm the asshole?! [...] At least I didn't throw my arm over your shoulder every five minutes and dig my erection into the small of your back.

BERNIE: I didn't do that.

DAVID: You did.

BERNIE: Sorry.

DAVID: That's all right. I liked it. (pp. 16-17.)

While Bernie is comfortable with David's homosexuality, he is nervous when the subject is turned upon him. Indeed, his insecurity in his own desires is what spurs him to swear at David, while the truth of their situations seeps out. David calls Bernie "asshole" and he is essentially right. Bernie's sexual repression makes him slightly homophobic and (as we ultimately see) a woman-killer.

More than a isolated case of a pathological mentality, Bernie is a victim of society who expresses his resentment for that victimization in the extreme terms of violent misogyny. Clues to his repressed homosexuality are rife, as they are in his attempted solution. David asks Bernie his reasons for marrying Linda:

BERNIE: I thought it would change things.

DAVID: Did it?

BERNIE: No. (p. 52)

Bernie has been in love with David all along, but, like Gilbert's David, the pressure society has placed upon him to conform to heterosexual standards has been more than he could resist.

Bernie's hatred of women is tangible in his words and deeds. He blames women for keeping him from being himself. Bernie comments about his experience of marriage: "Being married is like being a Grizzly in the zoo. If you don't have to hunt all you can to is pace" (p. 78). When he spends the night with David, his homosexual desires come to the surface. Yet it is really only during a night of drunken sexual escapades that Bernie can truly express his feelings. Otherwise, it is easier for him to kill women rather than challenge the role of a normal and heterosexual man. The narrowness of male sex roles here has the most horrible result. The truth of Bernie's sexually sadistic mind comes to the fore near the climax of the play. He takes David to see Benita, encouraging a violent and sadistic mistreatment of the prostitute to heighten his own sexual pleasure. He swears at Benita, forcefully rips her top off, pushing and hitting her. Violence, for him, is like an act of foreplay. When he gets truly excited, he can no longer hide his repressed love and sexual desires for his friend. Like a jealous lover, he hits Benita when she familiarly calls David "Davey". His sexual desires transfer from Benita to his real object, David:

> (Bernie cuts David off by moving behind him and putting his arms around him. He strokes David's body as they speak. The image should mirror the one of Kane and David on the rooftop.)
>
> BERNIE: You'll like it. [...] Trust me.
>
> DAVID: (Weakening.) No. I won't.

BERNIE: (Hands moving down. He unbuttons David's fly.) Relax bro'. It's just you and me.

DAVID: She's my friend.

BERNIE: (Hands inside DAVID's pants.) I'm your friend. I'm your best friend.

DAVID: (Mesmerized.) Jesus ...

BERNIE: Just us... (p. 90)

Bernie ultimately allows himself to express his homosexual desire for his best friend, dividing his hatred and desire in this one instance between a woman and a man. The ultimate result of this repression is pure destruction, focused at first upon women, and ultimately against himself. Bernie's death is the inevitable conclusion; indeed, this sense of inevitability mirrors that of Claude's demise in Dubois's play. Both are compelling consequences of social prohibition against male homosexuality and sex role deviance.

Fraser attacks male sex roles from both heterosexual and homosexual perspectives. In the character of Robert, he illustrates the destructiveness and violence in men who follow conventional male sex roles to the letter. Robert is cold, manipulative and abusive. He cheats on his wife and physically and verbally abuses Candy. He is too cold to empathize with his own victims, personifying the patriarchal view of women as objects to use and possess without emotion. By the end of the play, instead of apologizing for his transgressions, he advises Candy to "get over" her expectation that everything can "be perfect" (p. 75). Like Bernie, (though for different

reasons) he is so much a product of male socialization that he is irredeemable.

The characters of Bernie and Benita are extremes that illustrate the true power of the conflict between the self and society. Benita illustrates a different sort of social/sexual destructiveness from Bernie, however. She possesses the most subversive sexuality of all the characters and, coincidentally, she is also the most transcendent figure, like a surreal Mona[22]. She blends violence and hatred with sexual expression, turning it upon herself, just as the male Bernie turns it upon women. She sacrifices her own integrity to be a safety valve for society's ills. She services the desires of a sadistic trick and comments, "Just think Davey - if we hadn't been here to help him live out that fantasy he might've forced it on someone else - for free" (p. 47).

Although the characterization of Benita is more surreal than realistic, it reveals a similar internalized destructiveness. Just as society makes women the object of male sexual rage, Benita has made that social role into her basic identity. She has such a deep insight into the unspoken workings of society that she is an oracle, seeing into the blood, bones and skin of the people around her. She is fascinated with violence in society because she realizes that it is the most basic characteristic of society:

> BENITA: [...] I love reading about that kinda stuff.
>
> DAVID: Is that healthy?

BENITA: Is anything anymore? (p. 46)

She expresses and lives out the basic, violent workings of her environment, transcending it in her insight.

As a symbolic, oracular figure, Benita is borrowed from Herbert's Mona. However, Unidentified Human Remains is anything but a throwback to the 1960's. The play is also noteworthy because it adopts many of the aims and devices of The Dressing Gown while far surpassing it. Where the founder of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre created a play about the social development of gay men for gay audiences, Fraser integrates gay men and their experiences into a broader spectrum of people with divergent sex roles and social orientations. Fraser has Gilbert's consciousness of audience, but he goes further to achieve a larger objective. Investigating gay experiences from the inside out (like Gilbert), Fraser unapologetically and graphically brings everyday gay life from the margins into the mainstream theatre. None of the characters are stereotypes or freaks. They lack the sensational appeal to the mainstream of Herbert's or Tremblay's homosexuals in favour of commonplace emotional struggles.

Where some observers deemed the sub-plot of the murder mystery in Unidentified Human Remains to be superfluous and sensational, this device plays a key role in underlining Fraser's approach to the audience. In mixing straight and gay characters on his stage, he clearly wishes to do the same

mixing among his audiences. Thus, the play mixes an investigation of self-conceptions of gay men with a mainstream murder mystery replete with bloody clothing and a final shootout. Indeed, this appeal to conventional expectations helps to draw in audiences who would have no previous interest into questions of subversive sexual identity and its effects, while possibly serving to keep away the more conservative theatre goers. The characters of Bernie and Benita especially have a dual role, to appeal to both audiences. The scene where Bernie goes to rape Benita points to this double purpose: it is both an expression of male-centred violence against women, with a psychological subtext of repressed desires, and a visually arresting depiction of one step on a murderer's fall to self-destruction. Equally, when Bernie and David have their last, tense conversation the sexual sub-text is overlaid by the overt, linear plot of a psychotic killer making his last gasp.

Fraser does not end the play with Bernie's death, as he should if the murder plot were his main focus. Rather, the play ends quietly, focusing on David, with Candy and Kane at his side, helping him to reconcile his altered social role. David ultimately finds the ability to express and experience "The True Nature of Love" (like Tremblay's Hosanna), whether it is platonic with Candy or perhaps sexual with Kane. At the same time, the other characters involve themselves in loving relationships that subvert their earlier, expressed desires.

Candy is satisfied with a platonic love with her best friend, and Kane finds sexual love with a man. (Not unlike the conclusion to The Wedding Script--as we will see--it is an emotionally unsettled ending, perhaps best seen as an emotional ménage a trois.) They all reconstruct their social roles, integrating their innermost desires with social reality. Though the centre is still David, this conclusion is ultimately redemptive for all, and audiences are invited to join with them (just as the straight Candy joins with David and Kane) in validating their love. The play demands that any homophobia in the audiences be worn away by their experience with these characters' lives. The point, especially, is to see that the love between David and Kane is fulfilling, a vast improvement on their empty lives before. Thus the play is entirely subversive, inviting acceptance of homosexual love and inviting men to experience the femaleness (emotional freedom) within themselves. Fraser is inviting a will to love.

ii.

Unlike Fraser, Don Hannah's creativity in The Wedding Script follows the inspiration of Fortune and Men's Eyes as a highly politicized microcosm of society where sex roles are subverted to a didactic purpose. The form of Hannah's play is remarkably similar to Herbert's. Its didacticism reveals itself through characters who are both highly realistic, and who personify certain character types and individual

experiences within a dramatically heightened atmosphere. The Wedding Script takes Herbert's inspiration and pushes it onto a higher plane, however. While Fortune and Men's Eyes illustrated the need for progressive breakdown of sex roles, this play shows a society where many of these changes have already occurred. The drama of The Wedding Script follows this fictional society's further developments toward complete liberation from social/sexual dicta.

The characters of The Wedding Script have created their own universe to accommodate these realities. Unlike the Herbert and Tremblay plays, this play erases social tradition and concretizes personal, inner truths into social reality. The repression and destruction of those earlier plays is thus superseded in The Wedding Script by the characters' own abilities to alter their surroundings to suit their inner personal ideals.

Hannah has created a play where questions of sexuality and society are broadened beyond simple polemics on homosexuality. Unlike the previous generation as represented by Herbert and Tremblay, clearly he is more comfortable with the prospect of presenting a political discussion of sexual identity and change. While Alex is still the moral focus around which the other characters rotate (indeed, they always come back to her as a physical base and a spiritual guide), other questions of gender-centred social demands come to the fore. Questions of biological sex parallel other questions of marriage and

personal relationships, uniting these issues into a statement on the universal and basic human needs for love and acceptance.

While Fraser uses the physical stage arrangement of the characters to underline (almost in surreal terms) the psychological connections between his characters, and their common experiences, Hannah uses a more naturalistic version of these techniques to evoke the political message behind The Wedding Script. This is a small society of people. No one really exists outside of it, except those few (like Mullburger) who are casually derided. Alex's house is their universe. All the dramatic activity of this group of characters, this community, takes place within it. Virtually all the characters have lived at the place at one time, and the arguments and decisions which form the basis of their common social relationship are formed in the house/social stage. By the end, only Chantelle (who is also the least social character) does not take up residence in the house again. Splintered by the threat of change, the society has reformed itself, with a slightly different membership. Indeed, the household stands for society. As the house structures and symbolizes their ideal community (with its centre in Alex), the connection with Herbert's prison cell is clear. Each is a heightened and symbolic microcosm which comments upon broader society.

Alex is fully and immediately integrated into the play. From the beginning, however, Hannah portrays a diverse group of mainstream individuals. The focus is on these mainstream characters, and their own difficulties in integrating their inner realities with the social standards around them. The play does not rest upon the assumption of a permanent and unchanging social milieu, however. Where Fraser's characters must accept the hostility of society around them, and must rise beyond it, the characters of The Wedding Script have created their own idealized society. Social standards are reversed so that the people who represent tradition and sexism are ostracized for their retrograde thinking. Yet this small society is not perfect. It is threatened by new developments which require further broadening of social standards (specifically, standards of marriage and monogamous relationships). Though it is initially only for convenience, Rupert and Louise get married. Ultimately, they become intimate. The tangle of relationships that results forces each character to reevaluate his or her social expectations toward a broader and more humane understanding of human nature and individual needs. Audiences follow these characters' integration of new and different sexual and social ideas, so that the small society may accommodate and integrate everyone, regardless of individual sexual or social differences. They completely subvert all traditions of marriage and fidelity, accepting everyone's unique needs for love and companionship.

The need to free the self from social convention to allow love and tolerance is also Hannah's ultimate point. The Wedding Script is focused around two opposing characters, Alex, who has undergone a sex change, and Bob, Louise's live-in boyfriend of several years standing. The social integration of each is one key to understanding Hannah's developing social message. Initially, the audience, like the other characters, must take sides. However, with the other characters leading the moral choice of the audience, it is clear that the playwright intends the audience to side with the unconventional and unlikely choice of the transsexual. Just as Herbert asked his late-1960's audience to accept homosexuality and transvestism, Hannah's 1986 play makes the next step of demanding the acceptance of a person who subverts his own biological sex. Thus at the opening of his play, Hannah confronts the intolerance of his audience and makes the same political point as Herbert, Tremblay and the other playwrights in that people with unusual sexual backgrounds need and deserve respect.

Alex initially appears as a ordinary woman. She is played by a woman, and the other characters initially treat her as if she were simply a woman, with nothing unusual in her character. Despite her initially puzzling talk of "still [eating] like a man" (p. 12). Her ordinariness underlines her real female identity to the audience. The other characters lead audience opinions of her and disarm any inevitable

hostility toward her. Rupert and Louise, specifically, tell her of the plans, and ask her advice, leaning upon her experience with marriage as a guide for their future course of action (pp. 12-13). The other characters show Alex respect, and the audience is invited to follow, unaware of the unusual situation of Alex's transsexuality.

Just as the gay transvestite Mona is the focus for sympathy in Herbert's play, Alex transcends the ordinary affairs of the other characters to offer the only real and humane insight into their shared condition[23]. Even after years, Bob is still uncomfortable around her:

> BOB: Um, hello, Alex.
>
> LOUISE: I'll get you a coffee.
>
> BOB: No, I can't stay long.
>
> ALEX: Don't worry. I was just leaving.
>
> [...]
>
> BOB: I realize that lately I've been difficult and I apologise for that. I get uncomfortable around Alex and I know that he's she's, sorry, your friend. (p. 20)

Alex's experience with her own failed marriage draws the audience's sympathy (ostracizing Bob), and the other characters lean on her experience for guidance. When Rupert asks about her past, the story comes out:

> ALEX: Oh, I was turning into an emotional wreck, so I went into analysis with Albert Conklin. (BEAT) He thought I was gay.
>
> RUPERT: They are sort of the same, aren't they?
>
> ALEX: No, they're not.

RUPERT: Oh. Did he think they were?

[...]

RUPERT: You didn't know you were a woman?

ALEX: Who knew then? Susan and I had an awkward sex life, but for the longest time I just thought we were an average Canadian couple... Then one day Albert and I were talking about role models in business, and I realized that in all those years with that bank, no man had influenced me in the least. I didn't want to be like any of them. All of a sudden I could hear myself saying that the only thing I'd ever wanted was to be Eve Arden. (pp. 31-32)

Her past is revealed with delicacy and emotional power. She has struggled and she has survived. Rupert and the other characters respect and admire her without qualification.

Indeed, the audience is drawn into this microcosm to see that people like Alex (who turn traditional gender and morality on its head) are moral in real terms since their ideal society is supportive, humane, and tolerant. The one character who stands out against such sexual subversion is castigated and marginalized for his sanctimony. Once Hannah has made his initial point of demanding acceptance of Alex's transsexuality, he broadens his aim, getting into the body of the plot. The central theme of the plot is what the title would suggest: wedding and marriage. For these characters, the social tradition of marriage that validates a sexual relationship stands as nothing more than a hollow script. It is something to be played with and, indeed, to be avoided by people, like Rupert and Chantelle, who are truly in love. They see no moral struggle in using the social institution for

their own different aims, in this case for Rupert's legal immigration into Canada. As Rupert says, "...I don't need to marry someone I'm in love with, I need to marry someone I have no feelings for, It's a business transaction, isn't it? Loving her [Chantelle] complicates it, puts it in a whole new perspective" (p. 10). They play with the law for their own convenience:

> ALEX: Do you two have any idea how serious marriage is? It's a legal contract.
>
> LOUISE: Isn't that the whole point? (p. 15)

Marriage is no more significant than the paper it is written upon, so there should be no problem with Rupert marrying Louise rather than Chantelle. Legalities exist on a far lower level than the more important facts of love and commitment.

When the Rupert and Louise return from England (nine months after the wedding), the web of personal relationships that comprises their little society becomes inevitably entangled. The married couple have obviously consummated their relationship, despite its platonic intent, and it is only by this time that their small society becomes muddied with layers of mutual deception and posing. Each person has constructed a social role to play that no longer fits with their individual realities. While gender roles and stereotypes have long fallen aside, personal realities of jealousy, loneliness and anger remain. The first clue is the fact that Louise has begun to write under Rupert's name:

> RUPERT: And to think she did it all with my name.

CHANTELLE: (A LONG BEAT) Your name?

BOB: (BEAT) You changed your name?

LOUISE: It's just a pen name, Bob.

CHANTELLE: Yeah, but why use your married name? (p. 71)

They confront the last barrier of social propriety: monogamy. Their mutual hostility and anger stems as much from personal difficulties with the situation as from the social and legal dicta that only acknowledges strictly monogamous sexual relationships. The socially clumsy Bob brings their hostility to the surface:

BOB: Look, Lou, You've had nine months. Just how much time do you want?

LOUISE: I don't know. I, oh ...

RUPERT COMES THROUGH THE DOOR.

RUPERT: I need the luggage key, Lulu.

BOB: Lulu? It's him! It's him, isn't it?

RUPERT: What's me?

BOB: He's what you need time for, is that it? Are you with him? (p. 76)

Rupert and Bob begin a fight over Louise which spurs a fight among them all. The barriers that divide these four into two couples have been blurred by the reality of the woman's two pregnancies (the first, a miscarriage, may have been fathered by either man, while the second was by Rupert) as well as their continually shifting emotions. Bob is direct and insightful into the real changed conditions between himself and Louise, despite the others' attacks upon him:

BOB: ... I've been waiting and waiting and waiting for you to come back.

LOUISE: So I'm back. Why are you doing this to me?

BOB: Because I have to get to the bottom of things.

RUPERT: Right! Where you've got your head up your arse! (p. 78)

They avoid the truth, hiding it behind their assaults on Bob. Chantelle participates in this, yet her own emotions are mixed:

CHANTELLE: C'mon, Rupert, it's not that big a deal to me. I'm not my mother, I didn't spend the winter with a VCR and Elvis Presley. We all get horny. We're mammals. So what's new. And I know you think she's a good person and everything. ... So how stupid do you think I am?

RUPERT: I don't think you're stupid. I, I just thought you'd be hurt, that's all.

CHANTELLE: So what makes you think I'm not hurt? Am I made out of lead? Whatever happened to trust? Trust me a little, will ya? ... You're very compassionate for a man and she was really weirded out after she lost the baby. ...

RUPERT: (BEAT) She was so fucked up after the miscarriage. I thought, Christ, what am I gonna do with her? She's come apart. ... I missed you.

CHANTELLE: I missed you, too. (p. 81)

It is no coincidence that the characters return to the home of Alex when they are forced to resolve the conflicts that have occurred. They have all accepted the reality of the transsexual's personal sex identity, despite its unconventionality. Now they return to her to repeat the process of acceptance of their new, unorthodox realities. Alex stands for acceptance and humanity; her words resonate with

tolerance and sympathy and it is through her that all these characters cast off their hostility and reunite. She says,

> LOUISE: What should I do?
>
> ALEX: I don't know, honey. I really don't know.
>
> LOUISE: I missed you so much, I missed talking to you. You're the smartest woman I know, and I kept thinking "I have to talk to Alex. What would Alex say?"
>
> ALEX: Yes. Exactly. What would Alex say? Remember when she said "Don't marry Rupert?" How about "Marry Rupert"? Then how about "Dump Bob"? I don't know what I'm doing anymore than you do. I just talk smart. I just sound like a grown-up.
>
> LOUISE: What am I going to do?
>
> ALEX: Oh, sweetheart, who knows what to do anymore? If you play by the rules, they change the rules on you. But if you change the rules, then they change the whole game! Damn them! Goddamn every last one of them! (p. 85)

Alex is the source of insight into reality, but in this case, the greatest insight anyone can offer is simply that everything is hopelessly mixed up. Everyone plays the game of social roles and expectations, and despite the flaws of the game, everyone must accept their role in it.

Bob is the personification of all things stuffy and "straight," and he is derided for his traditionalism and anal-retentiveness. He is a "good boy," creating himself strictly by society's rules for male identity. In their article on male homophobia, Morin and Garfinkle inextricably link homophobia with the broader social and interpersonal intolerance that Bob expresses. Intolerant men like Bob are more authoritarian, rigid, intolerant of ambiguity, more

status conscious, more sexually rigid, more guilty and negative about their own sexual impulses and less accepting of others in general (Morin, p. 32). The other characters of The Wedding Script barely tolerate Bob, and perhaps even despise him. He personifies all the negative character traits the other characters wish to project upon him. Louise says, "...Is that a man whose glass is half empty or is that a man whose glass is half empty? I mean, his outlook on the world is so, so - I mean it goes beyond fatalistic - and it gets pretty depressing" (p. 8). He works for a bank, dresses conservatively and possesses thoroughly conservative values.

Characters would appear to be initially divided into camps: those who are progressive and tolerant (and who meet the approval of most of the other characters) and those who are not. The immigration officer, Mullburger, is a "snake"; the police are derided for harassing innocent hookers. Sexual subversives are accepted without reservation. The stuffy Bob is ostracized, set in relief against the others because of his intolerance. The political message of whom is on the right side of the argument is made painfully clear with didactic effectiveness.

As the characters become more at ease with each other, and as they are less threatened by the outside world, their acceptance of Bob actually grows. At the same time, Bob manages to relax much of his judgmental attitude. Not surprisingly, Alex is the character who really brings Bob into

their community. As Bob understands more and more of Alex's background, he develops a greater understanding of himself and his own inadequacies. Near the end, Bob says, "I'm too embarrassed to come into the yard. I followed Rupert and Chantelle up the street. I want to apologise for being an asshole" (pp. 86-87).

Bob has developed more than all the rest of them and he has come a vast distance from his former, intolerant self to the point where he unquestioningly accepts everything that has occurred.

When Bob and Alex come together with platonic affection, the significance of the staging comes to the surface. Alex's house is old, and semi-detached, with the addition of a new deck. Everything that occurs within this play happens on the deck. The house is like Alex in that it is older, solid, yet different from its neighbors. Old and new are inextricably intertwined, like the older Alex and the younger Bob, to synthesize something new and constructive. The old house is their social foundation, a thing solid and sheltering. It is also self-enclosed. The restrictiveness of the old house is broken open with the outside deck, just as the values of the past are built upon and broadened by developing social tolerance. Finally, and most importantly, the house is semi-detached from its neighbors (which are, presumably, also older houses). What happens among the small society who live in the house is connected to external, broader society -- but

not entirely. External society only touches upon these people, rather than dominating them. Unlike their neighbors, these characters have the new freedom of the backyard deck.

With the comraderie of Bob and Alex, the audience no longer has to choose between them. Both Bob and Alex are positive characters. Thus the ultimate aim of the play is inclusionary. It works from humane principles to show the variety of individual emotional needs. While Hannah fairly early in the play mandates acceptance of Alex, he also takes pains to integrate Bob into the acceptance of the audience. The men no longer possess their women nor does anyone demand sexual or emotional fidelity. The facts of their inner realities have come to be consciously accepted by all members of their small society, and have thus been incorporated into their sexual/social structure. The uncertainty and negativity that had threatened their community (which stemmed from a gap between internal sexual ideals of individuals and personal conceptions of social and individual propriety) has been overcome by a conscious or unconscious effort to accept these unorthodox facts of each person's inner sexual reality.

Indeed, the sexual and personal background of all the characters fade behind their individual value as persons who need to be loved and accepted. The political moralizing which demands the acceptance of sexual deviance in the character of Alex also demands the acceptance of all people. The social

message is ultimately about people rather than simple sexuality.

The Wedding Script ends with this social and personal role confusion largely remaining. However, the play is not unresolved. Rather, just like Unidentified Human Remains, the characters accept the reality of their unsettled relationships and emotions. This is the final bit of didacticism, in that the facts of individual needs for love and companionship transcend traditional concepts of monogamy and marriage. The play demands the acceptance and tolerance of this fact. In the same vein, Fraser demands that audiences accept the unique emotional needs of each of his characters. Fraser and Hannah are inviting a will to love that transcends concepts of society, role or propriety. They both demand the love of essential humanity, both in one's self and in others.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Sky Gilbert's identification of "closet plays" helps to put many of these plays into better perspective. He has three criteria for plays to see whether they are actually plays about gay males behind a thin heterosexual veneer. The plays must have a hero who is retiring and mysterious; heterosexual relationships which closely resemble gay ones, and a slight misogyny (Gilbert, "Closet Plays", p. 55-59). Thus while these plays all deal with a variety of subversive male gender identity in some degree, just beneath the surface they have much more in common. All are actually gay plays, including The Wedding Script, and all share the gay cultural urge toward social-sexual tolerance and humanity. Gay men and the struggle they undergo against he-repressive sex roles of society in these plays best illustrate the broad social need for breakdown in the uniformly destructive sex role barriers of society.

In a remarkable number of ways, the least openly gay play of this group, The Wedding Script, may be identified as a closet play. Though the "hero" of The Wedding Script is actually a female, Alex illustrates many of the qualities Gilbert determines, as she is quiet, intellectual, with an odd and slightly mysterious background. The heterosexual relationships are superficially-drawn, evoking the egalitarianism and sex-role neutrality of many gay

relationships. Though it is hardly misogynistic, the characterization of Chantelle is unflattering, and even hostile. Indeed, the transsexual Alex is entirely without a sex life, further suggesting a desire by Hannah to conceal the homosexual element of the play. In sum, The Wedding Script closely fits Gilbert's criteria. It also illustrates a real desire for sympathy and tolerance for sexual difference -- despite its overwhelming heterosexuality -- that closely resembles the ideals of the best gay plays[24].

Tremblay and Herbert have at times taken pains to tone down the homosexual significance in their plays, despite their superficial overtness. Tremblay has said time and time again that his plays are not about homosexuality, despite the sympathetic interest he takes in gay male characters in plays from La Duchesse to Remember Me. Such interest in itself reveals a greater interest than Tremblay overtly admits. In the late 1960's context, many audiences overlooked the gay significance to Herbert's prison drama, and many attributed the sexual activity to deprivation. Analysis of the characters, however, specifically Smitty, suggests that none of the sexual activity that goes on is driven by deprivation. All the characters had homosexual desires outside the prison walls, which comes out under the pressure of prison. Thus his play is also (subtly) a play about gay men rather than homosexual sex.

The other three plays need little explanation in this regard. Dubois and Gilbert write from an overtly gay male sensibility, and this fact permeates the humane philosophy behind their dramas. Both portray the struggles and experiences of gay men from the inside out, looking at straight society with jaundiced eyes at best. Fraser, too, despite his attempts at mainstream appeal, is truly focused upon the experiences of his gay male characters even at the expense of comprehensive characterization of women. The murder mystery plot becomes a transparent device after only a quick investigation.

In sum, these are six gay or closet gay plays. They share a common gay male cultural identity, focusing on the cultural concerns of tolerance and personal expression which are so vital to gay men. They are all a part of the developing gay male culture in Canada, looking to widen the meaning of homosexuality from sexual identity to cultural identity. As such, they all look to gay male experiences to validate and valorize them in subversion of traditional social stigma. These plays all attack the destructive capabilities of male sex roles upon men with different sexual identities, yet they are all also ultimately redemptive. Each emphasizes the unique possibilities for individual men to find freedom from the oppression of the heterosexual and traditional patriarchy, through an affirmation of their own inner virtues. Just as Mona has known all along the need for love, Hosanna realizes

this fact by the end of his epiphany. Bob, Tim and David all approach a closer approximation of their true inner selves, and all recognize the real virtue in themselves, despite their social marginalization.

The key is love. They all find it within themselves, they all find their own capabilities and unashamed need for love and companionship. The earliest play by Herbert has been the beacon for all subsequent plays to follow, in fact, as all the focal characters of the later plays -- from Tremblay to Fraser -- search for their own abilities to express themselves, their desires and their loves. They all search for the same transcendence Mona has already attained. They search for a way to find what is central to their inner being: a will to love.

All the characters after Mona struggle with the society's construction of them as male, with particular male traits of coldness and emotional introversion. It is a common theme, which is universally destructive, both internally and externally. When these characters meet their epiphanies -- even Smitty -- they realize their need to express their emotional realities (their inherent female characteristics, in balance to their masculinity) and to live by these realities rather than repressing them. All the characters express different and unusual sexual and personal needs, from homosexuality to transsexuality. When they are able to express their needs, they subvert male gender stereotypes on a dual

level, then, expressing their sexual differences with unmanly freedom.

What they reveal about the gay male experience, therefore, is a common human urge to freely express individual feelings -- especially feelings of love and affection -- which is an urge they all recognize as a vital part of the sexual and social tolerance gay men demand. Gary L. Hansen makes this point directly. His research indicates the need to overcome homophobia before real, progressive change in sex roles may occur in society (Hansen, p. 45). The greatest purpose of these plays lies here, since they not only attempt to assist the social acceptance of gay men, but also to teach all men -- homosexual and heterosexual -- about the needs for expressions of love.

Notes

1. Fortune and Men's Eyes, written in 1965, was first performed in 1967 at Actors Playhouse, New York, in February 1967, directed by Mitchell Nestor.

2. Hosanna was first performed in May 1973 at Théatre de Quat'Sous, Montreal, directed by Andre Brassard.

3. The Dressing Gown premiered at the Theatre Centre, Toronto, in October, 1984, directed by Sky Gilbert.

4. Being at Home with Claude premiered at Compagnie de Quat'Sous, Montreal, in November 1985, directed by Daniel Roussel.

5. The Wedding Script opened in April 1986 at Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, directed by Andy McKim.

6. Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love was written in 1989 and was first produced by Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary for PlayRites '89 New Play Festival, directed by Susan Ferley.

7. Though it is his most familiar and best known play, Being at Home with Claude is not as formally

innovative as some of his other works. As Jane Moss suggests in her article, other plays, such as 26 bis, impasse du colonel Foisy and Adieu, docteur Munch reflect a heightened postmodernist sensibility. 26 bis, specifically, works as a "collage of obsessive memories, flashbacks, a poem, literary commentaries, digressions, and intrusions leading up to the climactic murder" (Moss, p. 291).

8. Some reviews of Fortune and Men's Eyes were particularly hostile, including the review by Dan Sullivan in the New York Times, "A Distressing Fortune and Men's Eyes."

9. As a part of their research, Anne Steinmann and David J. Fox compiled an Inventory of Masculine Virtues (Steinmann, Appendix A) which delineates the characteristics most males in their study value in themselves and in other men. See also Steinmann, Chapter 4: "The Ambivalent Man" which discusses their findings. A more comprehensive study was done by Larry Craig Bernard and David J. Epstein. They integrated a number of Sex Role Inventories, including the crucial Bem BSRI (1974), reaching the conclusion that self-identified gay men express

more "feminine" attributes, such as openness to fantasy, feelings, and thoughts, aesthetic sensitivity and tendermindedness. At the same time, the same gay men matched their heterosexual counterparts in such "masculine" attributes as outgoingness, venturesomeness and self-confidence.

10. Gary L. Hansen's research links traditional sex-role orientation and homophobia (Hansen, pp. 39-40).

11. C.A. Tripp details his findings in the gap between homosexual activity in men and their self-conceptions of homosexuality (C.A. Tripp, The Homosexual Matrix).

12. Usmiani's unwillingness to accept the psychological reality behind these drag queens' sexual identity crises hints at that same mainstream audience homophobia. Surely these characters are symbolic, but they are also investigations into individual, personal psychologies. To avoid the psychological truths inherent in each character is symptomatic of a desire to avoid addressing the realistic facts of their homosexuality.

13. Robert Wallace makes the distinctions between homosexual and gay, emphasizing the difference between sexual orientation and cultural perspective. (Wallace, "To Become", pp. 5-10.)

14. The formal closeness between The Dressing Gown and La Ronde is too much to overlook. As Frank Marcus says, "In ten dialogues its ten characters each have one change of partner, until the circle is completed in the room of the prostitute who opened the play. Schnitzler presents a cross-section of Viennese society, with sex forming the links" (Marcus, p. x). They are also thematically linked, sharing a political aim in lifting "the veil of ignorance of the sexual realities and sexual politics of their society. (Marcus, p. xi)Unlike Gilbert's play, however, La Ronde ends with a melancholy and disillusioning message about the emotional emptiness of sex.

15. The Tarragon Theatre production of Being at Home with Claude incorporated a waist-high barrier between the characters and the audience. This had a dual role. It further distanced the place of the interrogation from the audience, and it underlined the unsexual or antisexual attitude both of the

justice system and of the social mainstream that underlies the system. This contrast with Yves's profoundly emotional sexual experience is thus further sharpened.

16. The wide variety in social experiences among gay men is detailed in Bell, Alan P. and Martin S. Weinberg. Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women.

17. See Gross, p. 90.

18. Gross, p. 90.

19. The expressions of aggression and violence that Gross notes as emanating from men insecure with their sexuality might in the case of gay men reflect an overcompensation for the social stigma of their homosexuality -- in the case of sadomasochists like Barry, or it might stem from their bitterly repressed homosexual desires (like Fraser's Bernie).

20. The Dressing Gown's emphasis upon visual effects and imagery is equally striking, compared to other Candian treatments of this theme. It anticipates

Fraser as well as Robert Lepage's Polygraph (1988). Lepage's play especially illustrates a fairly similar theme without any reliance upon linear narrative or any depth of characterization. Both Gilbert and Lepage depend upon theatrical effects to provide a political message on a surreal level. The layering, the pastiche of images may not necessarily register on a conscious level, but rather they appeal to non-verbal, unrationalized levels of thought to create a powerful statement on human nature and human sexuality. This visual emphasis -- upon objects and upon people who act more than they speak -- taps the unique possibilities of theatrical presentation as compared to other genres. Brad Fraser takes this visual experimentation and integrates it in a deeper and more complex portrayal of human experience, showing the real theatrical possibilities Gilbert and Lepage have begun. Lepage also discusses sexually-based self-destructiveness, as well as society's complicity. Francois has internalized the psychological violence society has inflicted upon him, turning it into a bizarre, masochistic sex game.

21. Candy fits into a pattern of women in these plays, and she is remarkably similar to Gilbert's Martha. Both live for the emotional commitment from a gay man, pining for (an impossible) relationship with him. However self-deluded these women seem to be, they are more than an easy way out for these gay male authors. By whatever derisive term gay men might refer to them, straight women who are in love with gay men are not an uncommon sight in gay circles. It is interesting that they find their way so far into gay male culture that they get dramatized.

22. Renate Usmaini would likely categorize Benita as yet another example of "grotesque love and monstrous sexuality." In this case, Benita indeed illustrates a bizarre sexual identity, and she works as a symbol and metaphor more than a fully-developed characterization.

23. Alex is both sexually distinct and exceptionally insightful. She is thus a more realistic type of Benita.

24. Hannah's most important other play, <u>In the Lobster Capital of the World</u> approaches male homosexuality

directly, (and so is not an example of a closet play) while echoing The Wedding Script's humane integration of differing individual sexual feelings.

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