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**ANARCHIC DESIRES: DECONSTRUCTING SEXUAL AND  
MORAL REPRESENTATIONS IN JOE ORTON'S  
*ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE***

**PORTO ALEGRE, 2007**

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**ANARCHIC DESIRES: DECONSTRUCTING SEXUAL AND  
MORAL REPRESENTATIONS IN JOE ORTON'S  
*ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE***

Dissertação submetida à Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul  
para obtenção do grau de Mestre em Letras  
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**PORTO ALEGRE, 2007**

To my parents Orondina and Romeu (*in memoriam*).

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## RESUMO

A presente dissertação tem como objetivo apresentar uma leitura da peça *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* do dramaturgo inglês Joe Orton, investigando de que formas os artifícios literários são construídos para interromper as representações normativas sobre sexualidade e moralidade. Na obra de Orton, os comportamentos e discursos das personagens ignoram autoridades representativas de instituições que, como a família, trabalham para ratificar a noção de modos sexuais ligados à matrix heterossexual que constrói uma subjetividade configurada na equação essencialista de sexo-gênero-desejo. A investigação encontra suporte na *História da Sexualidade*, de Michael Foucault, e no conceito de *performatividade* de Judith Butler, usando *Desconstrução* como uma estratégia de leitura. A estética literária nas peças de Joe Orton é alicerçada no anarquismo e na subversão como metáforas para interromper categorias convencionais de sexualidade que procuram controlar as vidas e os comportamentos humanos. Mostrando perversidade sexual pela fusão do que poderia ser ultrajante com o cômico, Joe Orton constrói um estilo único, conhecido como *Ortonesco*. Apesar das suas peças pertencerem ao território da comédia, são frequentemente classificadas de acordo com estilos cômicos, ou sub-gêneros. Embora essa classificação seja muitas vezes problemática e não haja consenso entre os críticos em relação às categorias das peças, eu trato *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* como comédia de costumes por levar em consideração seus elementos e a definição desse estilo de comédia. Os discursos das personagens e suas ações mostram como as representações sexuais e de moralidade criam construtos sociais que prendem sexo, gênero e desejo em uma equação que deve resultar em uma identidade estável e universal. Os elementos literários mostram como esse sistema de representação é subvertido pela desestabilização de autoridades que trabalham como centro de sentido do mundo tradicional.

**Palavras-chave:** Orton, comédia, representação, identidade sexual, subversão, desconstrução.

## ABSTRACT

The present thesis aims at presenting my reading of the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, by the English playwright Joe Orton. The analysis investigates in which ways literary artifices are constructed to disrupt normative representations of sexuality and morality, and in which ways the characters' behaviors and discourses disregard authorities, such as that concerning the family institution, which work to maintain sexual mores embedded in Western society by a heteronormative matrix which constructs a subjectivity configured in the essentialist equation of sex-gender-desire. The investigation finds support in Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, and Judith Butler's concept of *performativity*, using *Deconstruction* as a strategy of reading. The literary aesthetics in Joe Orton's plays is achieved by showing anarchism and subversion as a metaphor to disrupt conventional categories of sexuality which seek to control human lives and behaviors. Showing sexual perversity by fusing what could be outrageous with the comic mode, Joe Orton constructs a unique style, known as *Ortonesque*. Because his plays belong in comedy, they are often categorized according to the comic styles or sub-genres. However, that categorization is problematic many times, and there is no agreement from the part of many critics regarding the category of the plays. I take *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* as Comedy of Manners by taking into account their elements and the literary definition of comedy style. The characters' discourses and actions show how sexual and moral representations create social constructs that tie sex, gender and desire in an equation that must result in a stable and universal identity; and the literary elements show how that system of representation is subverted by destabilizing authorities which work as center of meaning to the Western world.

**Key words:** Orton, comedy, representation, sexual identity, subversion, deconstruction.

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# INTRODUCTION

**M**y interest in dealing with theater aroused during my childhood when my elder brother, some cousins and I played acting. My brother wrote the scripts and directed us. Sometimes we just improvised plays which were not challenging, but a mere reproduction of our childish perception of reality. At present, when I think of theater, I think not only of that magic way of living other lives, being other people, or just fantasizing on the stage, but of the possibility of recreation of reality through a play script, as a literary text. This is the reason why I propose to deal with this genre in this thesis.

When investigating some plays to study, I came across the contemporary British playwright Joe Orton, and soon I started searching for his complete plays and for more information about him. In reading some of his plays, such as *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, *Loot*, and *What the Butler Saw*, I became interested in the way his plays subvert the English conservative norms regarding sexual and moral behavior. By fusing what could be macabre and outrageous with the comic through a unique style which became known as *Ortonesque*, the author transgresses the stability of norms by using theater as a weapon against what is perceived as the hypocrisy of his time.

Only after his death, Joe Orton gained a place in the English dramatic history. A place that conservative English norms could not allow him to occupy during his brief life because of his refusal to follow. Orton was homosexual and his sexual perversion and anarchical impulses could also be seen in his characters. Joe Orton lived in a society where people had well defined roles established within categories of class, sex and gender; where their behavior was censored by norms of moral and manners, in a time when homosexuality was considered by many as a crime or a mental disorder. Orton ó through his plays and

characters that mocked and outraged the values of his time ó was a representative of the margin, writing against the English conservative society, authorities and institutions which controlled and categorized behaviors and desires.

*Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was written from September to December of 1963 and first staged in June of 1964 at the New Arts Theatre in London. For the sake of practicality, I will briefly refer, here, to the paraphrasable content of the play, which starts when the character Kath meets Sloane in a library. Sloane is the same age as the son she was obliged to give up. Considering him as cultured, Kath takes the young man to her house as a lodger. There, although Kath insists on playing the role of Sloane's mamma, treating him as a son, her intimacies with him increase to the point that she becomes pregnant. Kath lives with her father, Mr. Kemp, who is hostile to Sloane. Mr. Kemp does not speak to his son Ed, since he caught him committing some kind of felony at the age of seventeen. Kemp's hostility towards Sloane becomes more prominent, especially after he realizes that Sloane is the murderer of Kemp's former employer. When Ed goes to visit the family, he exposes the fact that Kath scandalized the neighbors, in the past, with her pregnancy after a relationship with Ed's mate Tommy. Ed, also, is hostile to Sloane at first, but later, he is gradually attracted to the young man, hiring Sloane as his chauffeur. Ed then makes arrangements for Sloane to become his live-in mate. Sloane adapts to any demands the situation makes on him in a combination of innocence and amorality. Kemp, a retired gardener, who once worked for a murdered pornographic photographer (whose murderer he recognizes in Sloane), dies after a struggle with him. Thus, Ed and Kath start bargaining for Sloane's sexual rights until, at the end, they agree in allowing Sloane to be six months with each one.

The themes of Joe Orton's plays affront the powe at89(str-16.3.95576(tie)19.4195(s TJ ET BT 4.0

strategies for transgressing the conventional norms of morality and sexuality set by a heteronormative scheme, and of the ways in which the literary artifices appropriated by the comedy genre work for a critique of conventional representation of gender, sex, and desire.

Contemporary discourses on sexuality have been produced to rethink constructions of sexual identities. This rethinking on sexuality triggered off new theories to take a new look at constructions on sex. The first to put normative categories of sex at stake were feminist theorists who were engaged in other critical theories, such as psychoanalysis, and post structuralism. These interconnections around the rethinking of sex opened a new field of studies to explore new conceptualizations of sexual identities. One of these fields of study is Queer Theory which emerged from the impact of those intersectional theories whose discourses operate to de-center the traditional and prescriptive essentialist discourses on sex. Queer theory appears to re-evaluate sexual identities of heterosexuals and homosexuals which have shaped our representations of sex, gender, and desire, and to criticize heterosexual hegemony and patriarchy. As sex is the main ingredient in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, which is marked off with Ortonian style, and as sexuality is too complex, I propose to analyze the play by taking into account some of the apparatuses provided by the theories of sexuality, so that the objectives of this thesis may be accomplished.

The play belongs to the comic genre, and within this genre it is classified as a Comedy of Manners by some critics and as a Black Comedy by others. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was chosen as the *corpus* of this dissertation because it was one of the most famous plays on the basis of Orton's reputation. It was considered outrageous by the middle-class English audience and some critics in the sixties. The play presents sexuality as an element which disrupts normative sex, mores and behavior, by using comedy as a weapon against the hypocrisies of the values of the traditional system.

The specific objectives focus on analyzing in what ways the literary artifices work for a critique of conventional representation of sex and morality, and on how these literary artifices construct the characters' sexual identities in the play, so that their desires articulate discursive strategies for transgressing the conventional norms of morality and sexuality within

the representational system set by a heteronormative scheme, which established patterns for their identities.

The thesis is divided into 3 chapters, besides the introduction and conclusion. In the first chapter, I present some reflections and definitions that I deem relevant to the undertaking of analysis. I start talking about how a given system of representation is constituted. I use Derrida's formulation on how the process of signification within the system of representation takes place, and on how this process is disrupted by means of deconstruction, so as to understand how representations of sex and morality within the English middle-class system are deconstructed by Orton. I also refer to Foucault's study on sexuality to deal with the intricacies involving the ways in which sex is embedded within discourse, and to trace back the different ways in which sexuality has been seen through time. Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (first volume) is very significant for the development of this thesis because it provides strategies of analysis on how sexuality was developed and constrained along the centuries and how it is tied to hetero and homo categories as well as to understand how these categories are produced. In the first chapter I use these notions, borrowed from Derrida and Foucault, as tools to lead a discussion involving Joe Orton's behavior and the shaping of his literary style, Orton's reconfiguration of the comedy of manners. References are also made to the social configuration of England in the Sixties.

In chapter two I develop the concepts presented in chapter one to point to the constitution of sex, gender and desire within heteronormativity. Judith Butler's arguments represent an important guide to dismantle heteronormative/patriarchal schemes of domination. Her criticism is used to show how the categories of sex, gender and desire constitute an essentialist system which establishes a causality relation where gender reflects sex, sex reflects desire, and desire reflects sexuality as an equation with elements combined symmetrically. Butler's concept of *performativity* is the basis for the deconstruction of those essentialisms imposed by hegemonic modes of domination. At the same time, I establish a connection between theory and the Ortonesque style of the play.

The third chapter deals with the analysis of the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. In this chapter I expose the characters' behaviors and desires, and examine how they manage to combine their actions and their moral principles, and how their desires deconstruct dominant

schemes of representation on sexuality. In this chapter, I also investigate questions involving five specific streams of plot development. The first refers to the ways in which Kemp, Ed, and Kath perform their sexual identities before Sloane's arrival. The second considers Kemp's, Ed's and Kath's reactions to Sloane's interpellations. Thirdly, I investigate the process through which Kemp's position as the father is destabilized. Next, there comes the analysis of the uses of the comical to convey the transgression of the representations of sex and morality. The fifth question refers to Sloane's performances and how they destabilize the norms and interpellate Ed and Kath to subvert sex, gender, and desire.

# 1

## BEHIND THE SCENES: STARTING POINTS

*You must do whatever you like as long you enjoy it and don't hurt anyone else, that's all that matters. Get yourself fucked if you want to. Get anything you like. Reject all the values of society. And enjoy sex. When you're dead you'll regret not having fun with your genital organs.*

Joe Orton, *The Orton Diaries*.

*"I am not yet born" because the moment that decided my nameable identity was taken away from me. Everything is arranged so that it be this way, this is what is called culture.*

Jacques Derrida, *Points...: Interviews, 1974-1994*.

**S**ex is the propelling spring in Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, and it is thrown into the play as a way of shacking society's values of morality.

The outrage started when characters sexual identities and their behaviors are not in conformity with the way everything is arranged inside culture. In order to understand how the literary artifices in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* disrupt the continuity of the coherent unity among sex, gender and desire inside the system of values of a traditional English middle-class family, and how this breaks in conventional norms, leads to a deconstruction of sexual and moral representations inside the whole

Western world, marking the play as subversive, I will develop contexts and definitions that are relevant for the analysis of the play.

The delimitation of the notion of representation is required for this thesis. The term, here, does not refer to the reflection or imitation of reality, but to how it establishes meaning in the constitution of the categories of sex<sup>1</sup> and morality. To analyze the ways in which the play subverts representations of the categories of sex and morality of middle-class in the sixties England, I start from the fact that meaning is constructed by a system of representation which is fabricated inside culture, through language. In order to understand how meaning constitutes ideas to form stable and coherent identities and codes of morality, and to understand later in which ways the play deconstructs these representations, I use Jacques Derrida's *deconstruction* as a reading strategy to map how that constitution of ideas is formed, and also to appropriate of his important concepts of *Differànce* and *Supplement* that will be useful to find how the characters in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* transgress conventional norms.

In his famous lecture<sup>2</sup> presented in 1966 at The Johns Hopkins University, Derrida pointed out that Western constitution of meaning has been found on the metaphysics of presence which grants to the *signified* the origin of truth of being, a center which irradiates meaning. As Derrida signaled in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*,

The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure . one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure . but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure

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<sup>1</sup> When I mention categories of sex, I am taking into account that any rupture regarding one category reflects in gender and desire as I show in the subsequent chapter.

<sup>2</sup> *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* introduced a new critical movement which broke off with structuralism and shackled Western philosophy thought since Plato.

permits the play of its elements inside the total form. [ō ] Nevertheless, the center also closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As the center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible. At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements (which may of course be structures enclosed within a structure) is forbidden.<sup>3</sup>

The existence of a center, which can be named as God, father, king, and so on, represents the origin of truth of being as presence, and balances, organizes, and structures the system of signification in asymmetries forked in two polarized classes where the first pole represents a positive value and is taken as parameter for the maintenance of its domination; and the second one is marked negatively as a marginal, a deviant, or an outsider. According to Derrida, this stands for "the authority of presence, its power of valorization, structures all our thinking"<sup>4</sup>. In this way, our system of representation engenders meaning within a system of differences which is structured around binary oppositions, so that the production of culture and identity is regulated and controlled to guarantee coherent identities within the hegemonic system.

In Derrida's own words "in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand."<sup>5</sup> This violent hierarchy lies at the base of the binary system of representation, which generates classifications such as center/margin, I/you, godly/profane, man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual. Binary oppositions control the production of meaning at the level of culture; so the way an individual lives his or her identity is regulated and controlled to guarantee coherent identities within the dominant system.

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<sup>3</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences". In: *Writing and Difference*. Translated by A. Brass. London: Routledge, 1978. p. 83-84. Author's italics.

<sup>4</sup> CULLER, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. *Positions*. English Translation: Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. p. 41.



Derrida's deconstruction provides a critique of Western philosophy that sustains the metaphysics of presence, by showing how fallacious it is, because it is impossible to achieve the origin of Truth and because the metaphysics of presence limits the *play*<sup>6</sup> of signification. Derrida decenters the transcendental *signified* from its centrality. In this way, the center is no more a fixed and immovable place which generates true meaning; in the place of the center, there is now a production of meaning which operates by means of *différance*. *Différance* is a neo-graphism in which Derrida substitutes the letter *a* for the *o* in the word *différance*. This change makes the destabilization of *phonocentrism*<sup>7</sup> possible, since the letter *a* in *différance* is a mute mark that is written and uttered, but not heard. In this way, the mark *a* is not established in terms of *presence*. With this neo-graphism, Derrida constitutes

the structure and a movement no longer conceivable on the basis of the opposition presence/absence. *Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing* by means of which elements are related to each other. This spacing is the simultaneously active and passive (the *a* of *Différance* indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distributed between the terms of this opposition). Production of the intervals without which the *all* terms would not signify, would not function.<sup>8</sup>

With the decentering through *différance*, there is no place for a fixed and transcendental meaning any more, and its absence opens the *play* of signification. By splitting up the *signifier* from the *signified*, the production of meaning is released from transcendental significations, and a possibility of substitutions is open to momentarily supply the absence of

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<sup>6</sup> *Play* is a concept that Derrida uses as a possibility to deconstruct the logocentric heritage of metaphysics as a transcendental meaning which constitutes itself as presence and absolute origin of signification. I will keep the word *play* in italics along this thesis to refer to its Derridean concept, that is, the possibility of deconstruction of a transcendental meaning, and to differentiate the term from *öplayö*, as a theatrical performance.

<sup>7</sup> Phonocentrism implies the belief that sounds of speech are naturally superior to writing. For disciples of this philosophy, from before Plato to Saussure, speaking is inherently richer and more intuitive than writing. This hierarchy holds that speaking is the main way of communication, and writing is a mere representation of speaking.

<sup>8</sup> DERRIDA, Jacques. *Positions*. English Translation: Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. p. 27.

center. With the independence of *signifiers*, the production of meaning will only be possible in the chain of *signifiers*, and the transcendental meaning starts to become a *trace*, that is, marked off by *différance*. In this way, the place of the center is occupied by a sign that supplies the lack of meaning, what Derrida called *supplement*. This term was coined from Rousseau, who understood it as an inessential extra added to something which was complete in itself. However, Derrida argued that something that is complete does not need an addition, and in this way, the supplement can only be required when there is an original lack. It is with the absence of a center that the *supplement* can supply the lack of a *signified* and occupy its place temporarily, making substitutions in the field of language. Thus, the logic of *supplement* undoes the binary oppositions because the first pole (*signified*), which is taken as the origin, indeed has a lack, and in this way the second pole, *the supplement*, will fill in this lack. Thus, meaning is not something fixed anymore, it is constructed in a system of difference.

These definitions referring to deconstruction are relevant to my thesis because they help us to understand in which level characters' dialogues in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* are embedded in a system of representations where patriarchy and heteronormativity assume a dominant position, and how they respond to a center symbolized by the father, who is the keeper of the family institution.

Heteronormativity is a term largely used in gender theory to represent essentialist norms of heterosexuality, fixing sex difference in two categories: man and woman, and establishing a mimetic sex/gender relationship. Heteronormativity assumes the centrality in the structure, guaranteeing its privilege over those who deviate from this norm, who are marginalized. It is important to mention that heteronormativity is commonly associated or confused with patriarchy. In a patriarchal system, sexuality is not necessarily based in a binary gender system, as happened in ancient Greco-roman culture, for instance, which was

patriarchal but permitted homosexuality or motivated it, in the case of the Roman military force. However, heteronormativity is now at the basis of Western society, and thus applies to England in the sixties, where male mores, rules and values can be carried on as essentialist patterns to fix identity. For this reason, I use the term heteronormativity as also symbolizing patriarchy.

As sex is the main spring in the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, it is import to understand how it starts becoming a discursive practice, to the point of being used as a literary element in the composition of the style of the play in order to subvert hegemonic schemes of representation<sup>9</sup>.

When sex is brought to the level of speech, this non-verbal experience becomes the source of many discussions, which leads to a proliferation of discourses on it, influencing personal lives and mores within culture. In this way, to talk about sex is to talk about the way we think about this wordless reality which is not directed to that non-verbal experience, but to crystallized discourse round binary categories: male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexuality/homosexuality. In Chapter three I deal with Orton's style techniques used to break those non-verbal experiences and taboos about sex by presenting a lower-middle-class family where a brother and a sister bargain for Mr. Sloane's sexual services, a lodger who combines purity and amorality.

Criticism by Foucault traces important contributions about social discourse on sexuality that I consider important to delineate. As Foucault pointed out in *The Order of Discourse*, discourses are generated within a determined space and a determined time by power relations which control, select, organize and redistribute meaning according to certain

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<sup>9</sup> Here it is necessary to explain that by hegemony I mean the production of meaning produced by heteronormativity, which lies down on patriarchy scheme of representation, as the only possible model in the production of sex, gender and desire.

rules and procedures that work as a system of exclusion and regulation. Foucault shows that this system of exclusion and regulation occurs through different routes: by means of interdiction, because one cannot say everything, or by the separation and rejection of what is rational or not, by the wish of truth, which separates false from true, by the comment, which limits the eruption of a new discourse, by the notion of authorship, which imposes truth as monopolized knowledge, and by disciplines, which are forms of construction of knowledge and domain of objects, methods and corpora.

As language is used to construct signification, hegemonic law makes use of that to construct a repressive and regulatory structure that guarantees its domain and interpellates<sup>10</sup> individuals to occupy certain positions within its system. In this way, one understands that the significations on sexualit

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and between women<sup>12</sup> was then an accepted practice. Male-female sexual relations was a practice necessary for breeding, while same-sex relations developed a sort of emotional union that induced to bravery and positive military performance. By the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. we can witness, in the Greek theater, the beginning of the taboos concerning homosexuality. The curse of Laius, the heir of Labdacus, is the great literary landmark. One millennium later, with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity, the Church adopted a strict attitude concerning the temptations of the flesh and of sexuality, which was from then on approached through the single purpose of procreation. Some centuries more, and, in feudal times, the Western system of dichotomies was already well established. In the opposition involving flesh and spirit, sexuality was already associated with sin and dirt. *Ars erotica* became then something evil and shameful, which should be controlled by means of confession. In Renaissance, according to, Thomas Laqueur's book *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* there was not an accurate anatomical terminology to specify the reproductive system. The female body was still seen as a variation of the male; the clitoris and uterus were versions of the penis and scrotum. Nevertheless, same-sex relations were condemned by the Buggery Act which was the first civil legislation against homosexuality adopted in England in 1533. Such law was defined as an abnormal sexual act against the will of God and man. The English parliament defined sodomy and any non-procreative sexual activity as a capital offence, and it remained so until 1861. With the Enlightenment, gender categories become a matter of biology. The discovery of deep differences between the male and female bodies by the medical science of the period led to a division of sex into a strict binary gender system which culminated with the naturalization of sex and gender in the nineteenth century, that is, the coherent continuity where a male anatomic body expresses masculinity, and a female anatomic body expresses femininity. The naturalization of sex and gender, combined with the

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<sup>12</sup> The lyric poet Sappho, whose poetry had as subject the love between women, was the most influential female representative of same-sex desire. She lived in the isle of Lesbos, where the name lesbian comes from to designate the new subject created with homosexual term in the nineteenth century.

economic growth, ignited the sexual differences by creating two distinct spheres, the public and the private. The public sphere which is related to business, politics, industry, administration, money-making and struggle belongs to men; and the private sphere which is related to home, domestic affairs, breeding, and education belongs to women. Men can cross over both spheres since they take the responsibility for the family, but women are limited to their private sphere. It is in this period that *scientia sexualis* becomes more prominent in the control of bodies and pleasure and in the formation of a normative conception of sexuality. Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality*, first volume, analyzes the way in which sex is put into discourse. I will now describe some concepts from his criticism, to explain how *scientia sexualis* formed technologies to control sex, so that the characters' sexual behavior can be analyzed.

Foucault explains in *The History of Sexuality* that sexual repression has been linked to discourse, knowledge and power, showing in which ways power circulates within the social order through discourse to produce truth and knowledge. In this work, Foucault shows that repression coincides with the development of the bourgeoisie, and states that sex was repressed because it was not compatible with the work force required by capitalism. Then, sex was conceived strictly for the purpose of reproduction and was, in this way, taboo. Even though Foucault refutes this *repressive hypothesis*, arguing that discourses that try to silence sex have only intensified and proliferated since the eighteenth century, he shows how the political system is tied to that hypothesis of controlling sexuality.

Foucault shows how power circulates within the social order through discourse to articulate what is desirable or undesirable, and draws attention to the fact that power is represented by juridical systems which are exercised in the form of law, and which establish a connection between power and sex. The juridical system

of power is the one which, under the name of protection, regulates political life through limitation, prohibition, and control.

The juridical structures of language and politics constitute the field of power in which categories of identity are engendered, naturalized, and mobilized. Through exclusion, the juridical system institutes forms of intelligibility for the recognition of the subjects which it produces, so that these subjects reproduce its logic. As the category of sex is articulated within the hegemonic language, which is structured by juridical systems and consolidated by heteronormativity, discourses are formed to legitimate its hegemonic structure through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysical, and their naturalized ontologies<sup>13</sup>. This means that individuals already appear in discourse as gendered and sexed. Gender and sex are always fixed categories that mark the system of identities and establish a continuity of the heterosexuality.

In this way, sex is a discursive construct within an existing system of power relations that defines the regime of *power-knowledge-pleasure* that sustains the discourse on human sexuality, and by refuting what Foucault calls *repressive hypothesis*, which claims that sex is repressed and silenced. Foucault states that

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tires gradually to uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledge, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.<sup>14</sup>

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there has been a stable proliferation of discourses concerned with sex, and thus different strategies to deal with it have increased.

<sup>13</sup> BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> FOUCAULT, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. p. 105-106.

Within Christianity a large emphasis was given to the importance of confession and of verbalizing sexual matters. Individuals were encouraged to confess not only their sexual deeds, but also their desires, thoughts, dreams, and their secrets. It was through the practice of confession that sex entered into the classificatory system, which selects what is sacred, clean, natural, healthy, and legitimate, and excludes what is profane, dirty, unhealthy, and illegitimate. Sex became an object of scientific investigation, while scientific discourses on sex mixed with techniques of confession, resulting in discourses which are responsible for the production of truth. The proliferation of discourses on sexuality and the production of truth contributed to raise mechanisms in the areas of economy, pedagogy, medicine, psychiatry, and justice, which incited, extracted, distributed, and institutionalized sexual discourse. These institutions constitute a technology of knowledge and power on sexuality which is at service for the maintenance of the sexual normativity. Contrary to the *repressive hypothesis*, Foucault shows that the technology of sex incited a wide spread of devices for talking about it, inducing itself to speak, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it. This dissemination of discourses on sex is not a massive censorship, but an incitement of discourses in order to regulate sex. Foucault does not deny the basic facts of the *repressive hypothesis*. He agrees that there has been a strong effort to control sex, but with the difference that power has been exercised to bring sex into discourse, and not to repress it.

Technologies of the production of knowledge brought sex into a wider and more analytical focus. To Foucault power, discourse and knowledge are connected, and knowledge is not a neutral accumulation of data. Individuals always have a will of knowledge, and the more they know about something, the more power they have over it. Thus, sex became increasingly an object of knowledge, and the people who



control this knowledge are usually tied to the governing institutions of society. The power of knowledge regarding sex developed mechanisms to control sexuality, which Foucault calls *deployment of sexuality*. Such mechanisms encompass the *hysterization of women's bodies*, which produce the thought that females have a highly sexual and reproductive body. In this way, it is considered a matter of public interest and of control. The *pedagogization of children's sex*, conceives them as highly sexual beings, who need to be monitored and controlled. The *socialization of procreative behavior* takes reproduction as the only function of sex. And the *psychiatrization of perverse pleasure*, which separates sexual behavior, taken as abnormal, and classifying it as an illness that needs adjustment. Foucault argues that these mechanisms do not repress sexuality, but incite discourses that are framed by them.

The *deployment of sexuality* was constructed on the basis of negative relations between power and sex which form the representation of power called *juridico-discursive*. It is these negative concepts of power that Foucault wants to get rid of by showing that power is the force that provokes changes in relationships. He highlights that our concept of sexuality is built through discourses originated from the different relationships, such as between parents and their children, between the law and deviants, between psychiatrists and their patients, for instance. There are constant changes of power in those relations, and Foucault argues that those changes do not represent repression, but a productive force which creates discourses around those relations.

Juridical power, however, invokes its discourse as a naturalized principle that afterward legitimates the regulatory hegemony of the law. It is through the interaction

of discourses and power that sex is produced, it is within the matrix of power that sexuality is situated. Another important aspect that Foucault raises in *The History of Sexuality* is what he calls *deployment of alliance*, which supports the basis for the *deployment of sexuality* to regulate sex and pleasure, to define the permitted and the forbidden, the licit and the illicit. He points out that the *deployment of alliance* is a device used to establish connections within society, and more precisely at the family level. This device is a system of kinship presented in almost every culture, and it essentially works to preserve the stable structure of society. Through this device, alliances of property or names are passed down, or protocol rules contribute to the formation of manner codes, but its connection with the device, which regulates sexuality, sex started being an important issue to be dealt with among family relations. Thus, married people are not allowed to have extra-marital sex, nor people belonging to the same kinship can have sex with one another, which contributes to reinforce the incest taboo.

The family institution results from the connection of *alliance* and *sexuality*, but it does not repress sexuality, on the contrary. However, Foucault shows that the negative *juridico-discursive* notion of power, which sees power as something that manifests itself to dominate, subdue, or render a subject obedient, still uses discourses on sexuality to preserve the set of laws and taboos established by the *deployment of alliance*. In the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, the family institution is constituted by a nucleus represented by Kemp, who is at work for the maintenance of the scheme of domination, but this scheme is discredited by Edg, Kath, and Sloane.

According to Foucault, Definitions of social subjects are constructs created within a definite discursive practice which classifies subjects according to new hegemonic modes of domination which appeared in the nineteenth century, such as psychiatry, specific jurisprudence, and a whole series of discourses about individuals excluded from the norm of heterosexuality. "Homosexuality" and "hysteria" are examples of verbal constructs produced in the later nineteenth century within moral, legal, medical and psychiatric discourses as apparatuses of control of subjects and their sexuality. In this way, social constructs are at the base of representations of sexuality and they are taken as a parameter for the construction of code of morality.

At the basis of the representation of sexuality are also the discourses produced by psychoanalysis, but I will leave the discussion of Freudian and Lacanian psychosexual development for the second chapter, where the conventional configuration of gender, sex and desire is dismantled, to disrupt sex-gender system in order to show how characters of the play disrupt hegemonic modes of sexual behavior in the third chapter.

Sex is the key-word for Joe Orton's plays. But for what reason? The answer of this question triggers off other answers to the questions which I propose to investigate in this thesis. Mapping briefly the sixties in England, I can portray some peculiarities of the author's behavior and style. The sixties was a time of great changes. It was without doubt a period of great upheaval not only on cultural, and social spheres, but also in politics, and mores. It was the era of free sex and free love and its catchphrase was "make love not war". According to Donnelly, "sixties Britain was obsessed with youth and the icons of youth culture, yet it continually categorised the youth question as a social problem that threatened established modes of

behaviour and moral norms<sup>15</sup>. The young generation refused to follow the code of living of their parents' generation. As the youth usually do, they wanted to construct their own identity, to assume the control of their lives, to be independent and to get rid of the tastes, styles and values of the past. In this way, a strong anti-authority feeling arose. Youth in England represented in this period a time of remarkable rebellion against all the strictness of the forties and fifties and chiefly against the inheritance of a Victorian strict set of morals and values. There was a challenge to rules regarding the way of using language, the use of drugs, and the way people behaved sexually and socially, since, according to Donnelly (2005), a relaxation in the censorship in terms of sexual liberation happened after the 1960 *Lady Chatterley's* Lover trial. Followed by liberal law reforms, there was a great rebellion by the young against this traditional system that oppressed them. Questions related to sex before marriage, illegitimacy, and the power of authorities that had always been unquestioned and unchallenged were brought to discussion. There were movements which opened the path for debates on the civil-rights, peace, rights of minorities, women and homosexual people, the legalization of abortion, relaxation in censorship, and other protest movements. Waves of liberationist movements directed new values and conventions. Some laws regarding capital punishment, abortion, divorce, and homosexuality, for instance; and there was also a relaxation in the censorship of books, films and plays, and, due to sexual freedom, a wider accessibility and use of contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancy. The sixties England seemed to declare *the end of Victorianism*<sup>16</sup>. But did the age of youth and permissiveness contribute so much to change the paradigms that they wanted to disrupt? Donnelly points out in his book *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society, and Politics*

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<sup>15</sup> DONNELLY, Mark. *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society and Politics*. Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005. p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Term quoted from: Marwick, A. *British Society Since 1945*. London: Penguin, 2nd. Edition, 1990.

(2005) that a permissive state is not the same as a permissive society. Despite the fact that most people enjoyed the permissiveness of the age, many did not exercise that freedom, and although many often had liberal attitudes related to personal morality, they behaved in a way a bit different from their more moral predecessors. Donnelly still talks about surveys that highlighted the continuity of power of moral conservatism across the age ranges and class division throughout the sixties. Those surveys show that during the decade young people were quite conservative in their attitudes towards sex, morality and social values. Through these notes, I could observe in spite of the great changes in the sixties that individuals were still tied to a system that controlled, limited, regulated their political and social lives, and that exercised its power over the individuals who were created by their own system. The oppositions to the normative values of the elders came from subcultures that represented a minority, which dictated styles, fashions, and codes:

British youth subcultures identified themselves by their dress, musical preferences, speech patterns and behaviour, and by what Lévi-Strauss called *bricolage* [ō ] These subcultures tended to be *male dominated* . female youth culture was more of a private, *domestic affair*.<sup>17</sup>

I realized through this extract that even among the most radical groups, subjects were interpellated to exercise their sex-gender roles produced by the apparatuses of regulation of sexuality, behavior, and morality. A proof of this is the fact of the screenplay *Up Against It* which Joe Orton wrote for The Beatles had been rejected by the group manager Brian Epstein. The Beatles were an icon in the sixties, and the group influenced the youth with their irreverence and rebel style. However, this irreverence did not break with the conventional morality and sexuality. In *Up Against It*, The Beatles commit adultery, murder, dress in drag, go to prison, and seduce the niece of a priest. Brian Epstein told Joe Orton that the screenplay

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<sup>17</sup> DONNELLY, Mark. *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society, and Politics*. London: Pearson Longman, 2005. p. 37. My Italics.

was not suitable for the group, and the reason is obvious; they could not be involved in such things, for they were an icon and many teenagers would imitate them. On Friday 20 January 1967, Joe Orton relates in his diary<sup>18</sup> the fact when Donovan<sup>19</sup> was arrested for smoking marijuana with two of the Beatles, but the police waited outside the house until the Beatles left because a star group of that magnitude could not be taken in a drugs outrage. Taking this fact into account, Epstein's decision-making is understandable. Orton's subversiveness in the movies could lead to a loss of the order, especially added to the force of the Beatles. This fact also suggested that permissiveness and all clamors for freedom in the sixties were watched and controlled. However, how did such an author manage to get a space inside art? The themes of his plays were metaphors for outraging the hypocrisies regarding sexuality in the sixties, but it was a time of opening in several social spheres, and there were also other groups of artists transgressing the norms. Nonetheless, the scope of his plays were limited to the theatre whose audience is composed more by intellectuals and erudite persons. It was as if the decision makers were saying to Orton: "hey, your subversion can go until there!" He got a space in arts, but this space did not let be censored.

In *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault refers to disciplinary power as one of the state apparatuses. It appears as a regulatory system which conceals its status of legitimating and exclusionary purposes by hiding the notion of a subject before the law and invoking its discursive formation as a foundational assertion which guarantees the legitimacy of the social contract where individuals consent to be governed and regulated by the regulatory hegemony. The disciplinary power is an apparatus of surveillance and regulation at the service of the system of knowledge and power which seeks to regulate human society in the first instance, and of the individual and his body in the second. Its purpose is to keep people's lives, their

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<sup>18</sup> ORTON, Joe. *The Orton Diaries*. Edited by John Lahr. New York: Perennial Library, 1986. p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> Donovan Leitch is a singer and songwriter who rose in the mid '60s in the United Kingdom and linked rock with hippie mysticism in songs such as "Catch the Wind", "Sunshine Superman", and "Mellow Yellow".

activities, pleasures, morality principles, sexuality, and their family relationships under strict control and discipline. Foucault argues that the disciplinary power was born from institutions that develop techniques in which applications are based on the system of power and knowledge, and act upon the subjects, individualizing them in order to gain a stronger control over the individual and his or her body. Institutions appear to assure social order and control over human beings and their bodies. Thus, institutions, such as the police, schools, hospitals, prisons, psychiatry, lunatic asylums, the church, and the very notion of family were created to keep the hegemony of the regulatory system which is based on juridical laws.

In this way, the many apparatuses created to control sexuality mark the way individuals perceive themselves and others. Even in the age of the apparent permissiveness of the sixties, people were still tied to the hegemonic scheme of representation of sex, genre and desire. In a survey carried out by the magazine *New Society* in November 1969 to measure people's views and preoccupations at the end of the sixties, I could realize through this sample that people were still closed to the main issues aroused in the decade such as reevaluating issues as homosexuality, divorce, abortion,

Asked to nominate which sixties changes they most welcomed, 51 per cent of the sample opted for ~~h~~ better pensions<sup>q</sup> while only 5 per cent chose ~~e~~asier laws for homosexuality, divorce, abortion, etc<sup>q</sup> When asked which sixties changes they most objected to, the ~~e~~asier laws for homosexuality, divorce, abortion, etc<sup>q</sup> emerged as the highest responses (its only rivals as the least popular development in the sixties were ~~i~~m migration of coloured people<sup>q</sup> and ~~s~~tudent unrest<sup>q</sup> both of which polled 23 per cent). Asked to whether there was ~~t~~oo much publicity given to sex<sup>q</sup> the survey found that 77 per cent of the sample agreed (the figure for the responses of 16-24 year olds in the sample was rather lower at 59 per cent). Meanwhile, 71 per cent clung to a traditional conception of justice and agreed that ~~m~~urderers ought to be hanged<sup>q</sup><sup>20</sup>

Inside this turmoil was Orton, and much of what was selected to this overview on the sixties England reflects a little about the protestor who was the author. He was a homosexual

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<sup>20</sup> Data according to the publication in DONNELLY, Mark. *Sixties Britain: Culture, Society, and Politics*. London: Pearson Longman, 2005, p. 157.

in times when homosexuality was considered a mental disease in England. But his protest was laughter. John Lahr states,

The comedian is a marginal man, someone who lives outside the boundaries of conventional life and acquires power (and danger) precisely because he cannot be controlled by society. Laughter is the message sent back from his cultivated isolation. Orton was a survivor whose brutal laughter was a vindictive triumph over a drab and quietly violent working class world.<sup>21</sup>

Joe Orton was this marginal man, he liked to shock people or middle-class theater audience by breaking off the conventional patterns. He and his lover Halliwell stole and defaced library books during a period of four years, giving them back with illustrative and verbal embellishments, such as the pasting of a female nude over the picture of the author of a book on etiquette. When they returned the books to the shelves, they liked to watch readers' reaction, and Joe Orton thought this very funny and interesting. After they had removed 1.653 plates from art books and inserted blurbs, drawings and obscenities in their places, they were discovered by the library staff and both were sentenced to six months in prison in 1962. Enemy of the order, Joe Orton's mischief led him to create new identities, such as Peter Pinnell, Jay Charkirs, Alan Crosby, J. P. H. Joy, to mock the negative critics and middle-class theatergoers. His best known alias is Mrs. Edna Welthorpe, whose pseudonym he created to fan the scandal of his plays by writing letters to condemn them for immorality. Orton challenged the hypocrisies of institutions which had as their representatives the church, police, psychiatrists, and family as presented in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. His plays bring the trace of his prank instinct and they subvert conservative English patterns. I do not want to establish a determinist interpretation for the play, i.e., Orton's plays were written that way because of his personal behavior, it is far from that, but undoubtedly his personal style

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<sup>21</sup> LAHR, John. Introduction. In: *Joe Orton: The Complete Plays*. New York: Grove Press, 1990. p. 11.



influenced much in the construction of what was called *Ortonesque*<sup>22</sup>, and *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* has much of this style. Orton's comic techniques have their roots in part in the Restoration comedies which were written and performed from 1660 to 1700 after the theater had been censored by the Puritan regime. Restoration comedy was famous for its sexual explicitness. However, the Ortonesque style provided a reconfiguration of this type of comedy by presenting sexuality as a subversive attack to conventional models of sexual behavior. His style is also influenced by the verbal wit of Oscar Wilde, and the satirical humor of Bernard Shaw.

It seems that there is not much agreement about the classification of Joe Orton's play. I have found two different ways to refer to the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* in the historiography. It is referred as a comedy of manners by David L. Hirst, and as a black comedy by Bigsby C. W. E.

of manners that is, according to him, financial and sexual success are seen as determining the conduct of a group of characters bound together through ties of friendship and marriage.<sup>23</sup>

influence of black comedy style. The characters' sexual perversion, their anarchical impulses shocked the principles and tastes of traditional middle-English audience and of some critics, who were guided by strict standards of conduct and codes of morality. The impresario Emile Littler and the chairman of London's biggest ticket bureau Peter Cadbury united forces to attack *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* as a dirty highbrow play which should never have been allowed in the West End.<sup>26</sup>

In this thesis, sexual perversion is used in the sense defined by all the technologies of sex to designate any desire beyond socially accepted ways of heterosexuality, any sexual relation which is not inscribed on a heterosexual system, or any sexual leaning towards people of the same family. In this context, the concepts of anarchism and subversion are almost synonymous. I use the word anarchy to express the characters' refusal to the interpellation in taking part in conventional compartments of sex; and by subversion I mean the way they disrupt and dismantle sexual compartments of sex, gender and desire in the play.

To guide the understanding of how significations of gender and sexuality are constructed in Orton's plays, the analysis also draws from the work developed by Judith Butler on matters of gender who argue that it is impossible to separate gender from the political and cultural intersections, once "gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities."<sup>27</sup> In this way, the notion of the subject as a discursive figure that embraces several identities, and negotiates its constructions even when it is interpellated by the representational scheme of the symbolic system. Butler's criticism rejects the essentialisms through which bodies, genders, and desires are determined and fixed under the biological formulation as set within the hegemonic cultural discourses produced by the patriarchal scheme which forces subjects with another bind to conform to

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<sup>26</sup> LAHR, John. Introduction. In: *Joe Orton: The Complete Plays*. New York: Grove Press, 1990. p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> Quotation from Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*, 1990, p. 3.

heterosexual standards of identity. Butler points out that the maintenance of coherent relations and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, which she calls *intelligible genders*, works for the regulatory system whose purpose is to regulate practices that generate coherent identities within the hegemonic system of classification. Her questioning on the distinction between sex and gender, suggests a discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. In this way, when the status of gender is constructed independently of sex, gender becomes a free floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.<sup>28</sup> Butler still formulates that gender is a discursive/cultural apparatus by which sex is produced and established as pre discursive. Therefore, the construction of sex is an effect of the construction designated by gender. Another important notion for understanding the boundaries of the analysis of the play is that of the body. For Butler (1990, p. 8), the body is not a passive instrument or medium in which a set of cultural meanings are inscribed and externally related to. Body is a construction constituted in the domain of gendered subjects. Judith Butler questions hegemonic identities by subverting sexual identities and making a distinction among sex, sexuality and gender, by appropriating the term *performative*, used by J. A. Austin, to displace the hegemonic concept of identity as fixed, stable, coherent, homogeneous, and unified. The term *performative* has the idea of *becoming* and *transforming*, it displaces identity as something that is kept by the concept of representation to an identity in movement and in transformation. Therefore, identity is understood as a construction, an effect, a process of production; it is *performative*. Butler's criticism helps us to analyze how the characters live their identities in the plays, how they deal with their identity conflicts, and in which ways the performance of their desires

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<sup>28</sup> BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*. New York & London: Routledge, 1990, p. 6.

destabilizes and subverts the hegemonic essentialisms founded in biology which manipulate desire for a rational control of body and mind.

Normative forms of sexuality put sex into a binary system of classification. But how to classify people who do not fit that system? How to classify Edø, Kathø and Sloaneø sexuality? In this way, it is important to explain some concepts used by contemporary theorists on sexuality, which appear in this thesis.

The term *sexual identity* is related to how someone identifies in relation to his or her *sexual orientation*, which is understood as the sexual interest addressed to people of the opposite, same, or both sexes (heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual). However, sexual identity and sexual orientation are not synonyms. For instance, someone who has sexual preference to people of the opposite sex, and sometimes has sex with a person of the same sex, what technically would be considered bisexuality, can have his or her sexual identity as heterosexual. *Gender identity* is a personø feeling of identification with male or female sex, and *Gender role* is a set of norms regarding to male or female styles of behavior within culture.

In this chapter, I hope to have presented the most relevant contexts and concepts related to my thesis. In chapter 2, I will rely on and develop Judith Butlerø criticism of heteronormativity in the construction of essentialisms of sex, gender and desire, establishing a link with Ortonø style in the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*.

# 2

## ORTONESQUE: A SUBVERSION OF INTELLIGIBILITY

*Sex is the only way to infuriate them. Much more fucking and they'll be screaming hysterics in next to no time.*

Joe Orton, *The Orton Diaries*.

On Sunday, 26 March, 1967, Joe Orton registered in his diary that aggressive commentary when Kenneth Halliwell told him about a new avant-garde group of theatre in America called *The Living Theatre*.<sup>29</sup> But who are *them* in Orton's comment? On that occasion, Kenneth mentioned the group as complete sexual license, to what Orton answered "It's the only way to smash the wretched civilization"<sup>30</sup>. *Civilization* was taken collectively by Orton, and Joe Orton sought to scandalize *them* with his style.

Joe Orton's style in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* shares with the subversion proposed by Judith Butler's criticism of the gender-sex system that I expose in this chapter, by showing how the play dismantles the representations crystallized by the conventionality of that system.

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<sup>29</sup> The Living Theatre is an American theater company founded in 1947 by the couple Judith Malina and Julian Beck. The company members created plays collectively, performing pacifist and anarchist politics, transgressing social taboos and claiming sexual liberation outside the conventional theater, that is, on the streets and for free. The group still exists in the U.S., but after Beck's death in 1985, Hanon Reznikov became co-director with Malina.

<sup>30</sup> ORTON, Joe. *The Orton Diaries*. Edited by John Lahr. New York: Perennial Library, 1986. p. 125.

In this way, I can start questioning in which compartment could the characters of the plays *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* be inserted, taking into account the normativity of sex, gender, and desire, which are engendered in two binary categories: man/woman, masculine/feminine. I am going to discuss how normative models of sex, gender, and desire are constituted to establish norms of intelligibility, and in which ways the play subvert such norms.

Incest, homosexuality, bisexuality, and nymphomania are ingredients which compose the characters' sexual identities in the play. To understand how their dialogues reproduce their actions, behavior, and desire to deconstruct conventional sexuality and morality, Judith Butler's theory is used to scrutinize the categories of sex, gender and desire - which expose the logic of cause and effect to maintain heteronormativity in the center of the production of heterosexuality as something natural and original, and also to show that gender is tied to a regulatory system which is constituted by technologies of sex. In this way, I can discuss about the compartmentalization that normative models establish into sex, gender, and desire, and the non-recognition of the characters in the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* inside cultural intelligibility configured by categories of man/woman and masculine/feminine, since their actions, desires, and behavior subvert those normative models. But how are those normative models conceived, to whom do they interest, and what for?

In her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler lays down the problem of the constitution of sex, gender, and desire. She points out that the distinction between sex and gender, posed by the feminists in order to disagree with the formulation that biology predestinates sex and gender, still remains problematic. With the split of sex and gender, sex was characterized as produced by nature, and the latter as a cultural interpretation of sex. In this way, gender still remains inside the binary system, since gender remains as two: masculine and feminine. Thus, there is still a mimetic relation of

gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it.<sup>31</sup> This mimetic relation results from the normative equation in which sex must predestinate gender, which predestinates sexuality, which predestinates desire. However, a question remains: How is that equation formed for the maintenance of normative categories of gender and sexual identities?



repressing the primary libidinal drives of the child in the maternal body. In this way, the subject resultant from this repression becomes the agent of this repressive law, and culture becomes a mean by which meaning is set up. The paternal law represents the center which organizes meaning in a binary opposition, and in this case, an opposition between culture and nature, where culture represents the law of the father, the male, the active, reason and mind; and nature represents the female, the passive, and the body. This binary opposition

promotes a relationship of hierarchy in which culture freely imposes meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into an Other to be appropriated to its own limitless uses, safeguarding the ideality of the signifier and the structure of signification *on the model of domination*.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the concept of gender as a cultural construct goes on determined and fixed no more by the formulation 'biology is destiny', but now by the formulation 'culture is destiny', since gender is understood within the set of law established by heteronormativity. Sexuality within that hegemonic scheme of representation presents a coherent relation among sex, gender and desire, where gender reflects or expresses desire, and desire reflects or expresses gender. This symmetric paradigm establishes a causal continuity between sex, gender, and desire that institutes and maintains norms for the heterosexual intelligibility. This institutional heterosexuality demands and produces stable individuals as well as it limits and regulates gender possibilities within the binary gender system, where the categories of man and woman, male and female act in an oppositional relation which consolidates the compulsory heterosexuality and the internal coherence among sex, gender, and desire.

The stable concepts of the categories of sex assure gender and sexual identities as a unified and coherent constitution of the subject. And this fact leads someone to think that this subject only becomes recognizable if he or she is in conformity with the normative standards of gender. The coherence and continuity of the unified and stable subject is socially instituted

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p.37. My italics.

and maintained by norms of intelligibility, or by what Judith Butler calls *heterosexual matrix*<sup>33</sup> to describe the framework of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, gender, and desire are naturalized.

In thinking of the characters Ed, Kath, and Sloane in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, I realize that they are not recognizable subjects, since they are not stable, coherent or continuous gendered beings, as I will refer in the third chapter. In this way, the concept of "subject" is defined through gendered norms of cultural intelligibility, which produces *intelligible genders* and institutes relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, and desire. The characters of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* are not recognizable by the standards of gender intelligibility, since

the specters of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the "expression" or "effect" of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice.<sup>34</sup>

The coherence and continuity of gender, sex, and desire are installed by a heteronormativity which produces asymmetrical relations between genders in which masculinity differs from femininity through attributes of male and female, respectively. This cultural matrix is established to consolidate that internal coherence, and becomes the means by which gender identity is accepted or not, whether gender is intelligible or not, and it is the binary relation between these intelligible genders that regulates and shapes the meaning of sexuality.

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality, which regulates and restricts gender within the binary pair, prevents the subversive multiplicity of a sexuality

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<sup>33</sup> Butler coined this term from Monique Wittig's heterosexual contract, and from Adrienne Rich's notion of compulsory heterosexuality.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

which can put heterosexual, reproductive, and medico juridical hegemonies at stake. If language is the means by which heteronormativity constructs the system of representation, discourse is the means by which it keeps its hegemony. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, that hegemony is represented by the presence of the father, Kemp.

The Ortonesque play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, which has to do with sex, morality, and behavior, is marked by the presence of the father that is constantly deprived of authority by the characters' behavior and desire. The way the characters live their sexual identities, their behavior and manners, and their anarchical desires, shocked the English middle-class audience in the sixties who were the witnesses of all of that lasciviousness which was confined only inside the characters' desires and their habitat.

I have shown along this thesis that technologies at work of a power regime manipulate subjects and interpellate them to consolidate and naturalize the power regimes as masculine and heterosexist. However, this regime is put at stake when the characters of the play present their anarchic desires, and subvert conventional norms. The suggestion of an incestuous relationship between Kath and Sloane breaks off a taboo and outrages English middle-class society. In the same way, the homosexual relationship between Ed and Sloane, and the bisexuality of the latter establish unthinkable new framework to the sixties English traditional manners. At the same time, the disruption of the family authority, and moral values in the play established anarchism which shocked and outraged that society.

There are many interpretations regarding the construction of sexed subjects. Judith Butler presents in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* a critique of Lacanian theory since the theory of the paternal law presents a problematic construction of identity embedded in the division of individuals in *being the phallus* and *having the phallus*.

Butler shows that the symbolic order creates cultural intelligibility by posing the exclusive positions of having the phallus as men's positions, and being the phallus, women's position:

To *be* the Phallus is to be the *signifier* of the desire of the Other and *to appear* as this signifier. In other words, it is to be the object, the Other of a (heterosexualized) masculine desire, but also to represent or reflect that desire. This is an other that constitutes, not the limit of masculinity in a feminine alterity, but the site of a masculine self-elaboration. For women to *be* the Phallus means, then, to reflect the power of the Phallus, to signify that power, to *embody* the Phallus, to supply the site to which it penetrates, and to signify the Phallus through *being* its Other, its absence, its lack, the dialectical confirmation of its identity.<sup>35</sup>

Through this assertion, it is clear that sexual difference installs a heterosexual matrix where desire is always heterosexual, and sex is engendered in the category of gender. This heterosexual matrix marked off by the polarity man/woman, masculine/feminine establishes coherence and continuity between sex, gender, desire, and sexuality that mark boundaries for the body, sexual practices, and desire, so that only practices and kinds of behavior in conformity with heteronormativity are intelligible and acceptable. Here I can ask the initial question posed at the beginning of this chapter: in which compartment could the characters of the play be inserted? The answer is only possible through the subversion of those heteronormative norms. Later, I will lay out Judith Butler's alternative of *performativity* to subvert that normative scheme, and show that the characters of the play ever since then disrupted the dominant representations of sex, gender, desire. Before that, it is necessary to continue the reflection on some elements presented in the plays that mark the characters as unintelligible genders.

The incestuous relationship between Kath and Sloane presented in the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* pose an important point for discussion. The taboo incest is at least as old as Sophocles's Greek tragedy *Oedipus the King*. From there Freud formulated his *Oedipus complex* theory as part of human psychosexual development. Actually, it was after the

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<sup>35</sup> BUTLER, 1990. p. 44.

formulation of the theory of unconscious in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that Freud provided innovative interpretation on sexuality. It was in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* that Freud set the foundations for the *Oedipus* and *Castration complexes*, but it is in *The Ego and the Id*, written in 1923, that Freud explains boys' and girls' conflicting process in the development of their sexuality. In this work, Freud explains that the *Oedipus conflict* starts during the boys' phallic stage, about 3 and 6 years-old. The young boy is in love with his mother and wishes his father to be cast off. However, when the infant realizes that his mother does not have a penis, he fears that his father punishes him by castrating his genitals

not oriented toward the father, neither the girls toward the mother. But the boy identifies with his father and consolidates his gender identity in masculine, and the girl with her mother, and her gender identity in feminine. Thus, both dispositions consolidate a heterosexual frame at the same time that it is installed a prohibitive law of parent as an object of desire, and consequently as a natural disposition, which culminates in a culturally accepted exogamic kinship and heterosexuality.

On the other hand, Lacan took away psychoanalysis from its dependence on biologism, and provided a way to comprehend how human subject enters into the social order through language. In his work *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Lacan establishes that the infant's entrance into the field of language positions him in the *symbolic order* which is possible by his acceptance to the *Name-of-the-father*. In the Lacanian theory, the *Name-of-the-father* is the fundamental *signifier* associated with *phallus*; it is the signifier of the law, and restrictions that control our desires and rules of communication, and confers identity on human beings. In the paper *The Meaning of the Phallus*<sup>36</sup>, the term *phallus* is used to mean the imaginary and symbolic representation of the *penis*, distinguishing it from its anatomical role.

Lacan develops and restructures much of Freud's studies, and the *Oedipus complex* is also important in his theory, but with the distinction that he focuses the complex in the acquisition of language. In *Oedipus complex*, which corresponds to the child's entrance into the *symbolic order*, Lacan establishes a division in three phases as briefly followed: in the first phase, preoedipal phase, the child assumes that its mother lost her phal(symbol)-44.t and tian nt

*father*

*of*

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incest taboo; and in the third and last phase, the real father performs the symbolic castration, by showing that he possesses the phallus, forcing the child to give up his attempt *to be* the phallus (the object of its mother's desire) *to have* the phallus. In this moment, sexual difference is installed. For Lacan (2002), this distinction of *being* and *having* the phallus provides the cultural configuration by which the child assumes its position of masculine or feminine; for him, sexual difference is not the result of the identification with the sex of the parent who the child identifies, as in Freud, but it is the relation of the child with the phallus which determines its sexual position.

As language structures are understood as symbolic, the moment when the child incorporates the father figure and cultural regulations, incest is reasserted within culture as a prohibition and repressed with the child's entrance into culture. The rule of exogamy in the production of culture shows that the law which forbids the incest between son and mother triggers off the structures of kinship where libidinal displacements are regulated through language. This prohibition is institutionalized in terms of law and it starts constituting the individual's system of representation; for instance, if one looks up the meaning of the word incest in an ordinary dictionary, he or she will find: 'a crime in which someone has sex with a person they are closely related to.'<sup>37</sup>

Judith Butler (1990) points out that those psychoanalytic paradigms of identification of the subject and sexual difference reinforce the heterosexual hegemony and produce the essentialist equation of sex-gender-desire. Both Lacan's framework in which sexual difference is fixed within the binary system of *being* or *having* the phallus, and Freudian dispositions that constitute sexual difference as an effect of a law are seen as a narrative of

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<sup>37</sup> Transcription from *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*. London & Glasgow: Collins Publishers. 1990. p. 397.

gender acquisition which 'has always recognized the productive function of the incest taboo; it is what creates heterosexual desire and discrete gender identity.'<sup>38</sup>

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault refutes the *repressive hypothesis* of the incest taboo by arguing that the law that prohibits incest must be understood as a power that produces the desire that it represses. Judith Butler in her appropriation of Foucault's critique of the repressive hypothesis points out that 'the notion of an 'original' sexuality forever repressed and forbidden thus becomes a production of the law which subsequently functions as its prohibition.'<sup>39</sup> In this way, according to Butler (1990) the taboo against incest is a taboo against homosexuality, since the original desire is based on sexual dispositions which consolidate gender only as masculine or feminine, and which are taken as pre-discursive, that is, prior to their manifestation into language and culture. Desire is produced and repressed to consolidate the juridical power. In this way, both bisexuality and homosexuality, taken as primary libidinal dispositions, are incorporated by the mechanisms of power to keep them repressed and culturally unintelligible.

The consolidation of juridical power produces a mark for the unintelligible sexuality. As I showed before, technologies are produced to regulate and maintain the domain of the heterosexual matrix through apparatuses of regulation. Here, the concepts of bisexual and homosexual appear to sanction heterosexuality. Judith Butler argues that

The bisexuality that is said to be 'outside' the Symbolic and that serves as the locus of subversion is, in fact, a construction within the terms of that constitutive discourse, the construction of an 'outside' that is never fully 'inside', not a possibility beyond culture, but a concrete cultural possibility that is refused and redescribed as impossible. What remains 'unthinkable' and 'unsayable' within the terms of an existing cultural form is not necessarily what is excluded from the matrix of intelligibility within that form; on the contrary, it is marginalized, not the excluded, the cultural possibility that calls for dread or, minimally, the loss of

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<sup>38</sup> BUTLER, 1990. p. 76.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 76.



sanctions. [í ] The ðunthinkableö is thus fully within culture, but fully excluded from *dominant* culture.<sup>40</sup>

No less *unthinkable* or *unsayable*, in the philosopher's words, is the concept of homosexuality which appears as *perversion*. Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* shows that many apparatuses created to regulate sexuality through deployments put sex into boundaries and established what was and what was not permitted. The increase of discourses on sexuality exceeded the limits confined previously to marriage, and started to focus on those who were outside that category, such as homosexuals, in order to separate them from what were considered natural practices, and classify them as violators of the law. In this way, the apparatus of *psychiatrization of the perverse* which ensures heterosexual desire as natural, healthy, and legitimate arouse.

Homosexuality was considered a criminal act in England until the Sexual Offenses Bill reversed its illegality in July 1967. The homosexual law reform was limited in its scope, excluding the merchant navy and armed forces from it, and not giving total license for homosexuals to behave as they wanted. On the contrary, the law decriminalization limited that practice behind closed doors, and it was directed specifically to homosexual acts between two adult men aged 21 or over. This represented four years above the consented age for heterosexual sex. The act did not change its status of abnormality, and

during the Bill's passage skeptics were reassured that there was never any question of homosexuality being endorsed as a valid sexual orientation. Instead, it was argued, homosexuals should be seen as *unfortunates who suffered from a psychological malfunction, deserving pity and treatment rather than imprisonment*.<sup>41</sup>

The American Psychiatric Association's standard book *DSM-II: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (the second edition), published in 1968, categorizes homosexuality as one of the ðsexual deviationsö, and only in 1973, homosexuality was

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 77. Author's emphasis.

<sup>41</sup> DONNELLY, 2005. p. 119. My italics.

removed from its list of mental and emotional disorders.<sup>42</sup> The Ortonesque play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was written and first produced before 1973. This means that the play had subversive contents for its time, since the characters were out of the scope of norms of cultural intelligibility.

The contents of the play presented here include incest, homosexuality, bisexuality and nymphomania, as well as the disruption of representatives of the norm, from a locus of subversion for the construction of coherence between sex, gender, and desire idealized by a compulsory heterosexuality whose interests are to regulate sexuality and keep its hegemony. According to Judith Butler,

The construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not necessarily follow from sex, and desire, or sexuality generally, does not seem to follow from gender ó indeed, where none of these dimensions of significant corporeality express or reflect one another. When the disorganization and disaggregation [sic] of the field of bodies disrupt the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence, it seems that the expressive model loses its descriptive force.<sup>43</sup>

If heterosexual coherence is a fiction, the coherence between sex, gender, and desire is an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality.<sup>44</sup> In this heteronormative presupposition, the body appears as a construct that preexists the acquisition of sexed signification, that is, as passive and prior to discourse. The body is only legitimated inside the cultural intelligibility of heterosexual matrix. Bodies that exceed the boundaries of that intelligibility are marked off as the *other*, thus ensuring heterosexuality as natural and original. Butler states that sexed bodies, like gender, are created and regulated by social norms, and that they are simultaneously engendered.

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<sup>42</sup> These data are according to the article "Does Mental Illness Exist?" by Lawrence Stevens, J. D., available at <<http://www.antipsychiatry.org/exist.htm>> Accessed on 8 December, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> BUTLER, 1990. p. 135.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 136.

The characters of the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* break off the limits of their bodies, and disorganize that regulatory fiction, where the bodies appear as sexed and gendered within the frame of heterosexual matrix. The Ortonesque play presents bodies that are not recognizable by cultural intelligibility. In this way, the characters lose their status of subjects, and start being marked off as the *other*, as subversive. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, bodies

*perlocutionary acts*, and those that, in saying, indeed perform what is being said, called *performative utterances* or *illocutionary acts*. In this way, "the cat is on the mat", for instance, just reports an occurrence, it is *constative*. But when someone says "I promise to pay you tomorrow" this utterance is not limited to describing a situation, but to make something to happen, effect or carry out to accomplish the act of promising; in this way. It is *performative*.

The notion of *performativity* as a political strategy opens the possibility for resignifying categories of body, sex, gender, and desire within the heterosexual matrix. When Butler asserts that sex is performative, she asserts that bodies are not merely described, but constituted in the act of description. When a doctor or nurse announces "It's a girl/boy!", they are not simply describing what they see, they are attributing a sex and a gender to a body that can not have an existence outside discourse.

Through the concept of *performativity*, Butler establishes a possibility for subversion of naturalized notions of gender that have been consolidating the power of masculine hegemony and heterosexist oppression. By proposing a resignification of gender as a process, a series of discontinuous acts that must be repeatedly performed, Butler destabilizes the categories of body, sex, gender, and sexuality constructed by the heterosexist binary, and points out that sexual identities are far more fluid.

Butler exemplifies her theory of *performativity* by describing the performance of a drag, and pointing out the difference between the anatomy of the performer and the gender performed,

[í ] we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomical of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance. As much as drag creates a unified picture of "woman" [í ] it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual

coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself as well as its contingency.*<sup>45</sup>

In this way, one realizes that sexual identity is not fixed, stable, coherent, universal, or homogenous. It is *performative*. Performativity disrupts the mimetic relation between sex, and gender, discussed previously, and makes possible the interruption of hegemonic identities which lie on reproductive power relations, and which are on the basis of the system of representation.

In *Burning Acts*,<sup>46</sup> Butler argues that there are some similarities between Austin's performative and Althusser's notion of interpellation<sup>47</sup>:

[ ] it is the police who hail the trespasser on the street: "Hey you there!" brings the subject into sociality through a life-imbueing [sic] reprimand. The doctor who receives the child and pronounces "It's a girl!" begins that long string of interpellations by which the girl is transitively girl'd; gender is ritualistically repeated, whereby the repetition occasions both the risk of failure and the congealed effect of sedimentation.<sup>48</sup>

"Gender is ritualistically repeated," such a repetition constitutes what Derrida calls *citatoriality*, in which an expression is taken from social context, where it was uttered so many times, and introduced into a new context where it appears as a result exclusively of the speaker, and thus becomes "domesticated" and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony<sup>49</sup>. Then gender appears as a set of repeated acts within a very strict regulatory structure that crystallizes it to produce the appearance of a natural kind of being. Butler proposes an interruption of the process of the citatoriality to think gender outside the frames of heterosexual matrix by showing that gender

<sup>45</sup> BUTLER, 1990. p. 137. Author's italics.

<sup>46</sup> For further information, see PARKER, Andrew; SEDGWICK, Eve Kosofsky (orgs.). *Performativity and performance*. New York: Routledge, 1995. p. 197-227.

<sup>47</sup> The notion of interpellation was presented in a footnote on page 5 of the introductory chapter.

<sup>48</sup> BUTLER, Judith. *Burning Acts*. In: PARKER, Andrew; SEDGWICK, Eve Kosofsky (orgs.). *Performativity and performance*. New York: Routledge, 1995. p. 203.

<sup>49</sup> BUTLER, 1990. p. 139.

ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted social temporality. [í ]. If gender attributes, however, are not expressive but performative, then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. [í ] If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. [í ] Gender can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived.<sup>50</sup>

In the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, the characters are interpellated by several regulations to act within the frame of the matrix of heterosexuality, but they respond to that interpellating call through their anarchic desires which constantly put that regulatory structure at stake, and thus work as a locus of subversion of the conventional sexual and moral norms.

The considerations about deconstruction in the first chapter constitute the basis for subversion of normative categories of sex, gender, and desire, and as Judith Butler and Foucault point out, the universal and transcendental center which represents the heterosexuality is a fictitious construct and lack in its interiority, which opens the possibility of the *play*. And if there is a lack on the part of the meaning which imposes as original, this means that this lack must be filled in. And the absence of the supposed original and universal signified is supplied by a significant which comes as an addition to the signified, constituting what Derrida calls the *logic of the supplement*, as presented in the first chapter, and thus undoing the binary oppositions.

In the play, the characters, their actions, desires, and speech can be read as *signifiers* and, in this way, as *supplements* which are at the margin; thus the father can be read as the universal and transcendental center of meaning. In the play, the center represents the

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<sup>50</sup> BUTLER, 1990. p. 140-141. Author's italics.

regulatory system that seeks to control and regulate the characters' actions through sexual, moral, and social codes which make possible the characters' inscription on the cultural intelligibility. Through the moment when those centers and what they represent lose their status of universal and original, once it was unveiled this originality is a fantasy, the *play* becomes possible, and the characters can occupy the place in the chain of signification. This is the moment when subversion is possible.

*Entertaining Mr. Sloane* opens up the possibility of the *play*, and exposes the internal insufficiency of the center with its apparatuses of control and regulation to keep the hegemony of a compulsory heterosexuality. Through the images of anarchy, the Ortonesque play disrupts the hegemonic system by presenting homosexuality, bisexuality, incest, nymphomania, and putting such signifiers as supplements on the network of significations to reveal the lack inside the hegemonic center, to accomplish the subversion of sex, gender, and desire.

In this chapter, I presented how the symbolic system constitutes the network of signification and constructs the system of representation for sex, gender, and desire embedded in binary oppositions that ratifies and constitute the matrix of heterosexuality, creating a cultural intelligibility to mark recognizable subjects and to interpellate them to perpetuate compulsory heterosexuality. I also exposed the criticism of the philosopher Judith Butler to point at ways of subversion of the hegemonic center through deconstructionist ideas, and the technologies of sex revealed by Foucault to deal with sexuality. These theoretical approaches expose the reasons why the characters are not constituted as intelligible, and the plays were classified as subversive by English middle-class audience or some critics in the context of the sixties England. In the next chapter, I will present my reading of the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, and show how those technologies of knowledge and power act upon the characters,

their actions, and behavior, and also how the literary artifices deconstruct sexual, moral, and social representations, and constitute a site for transgression of the regulatory system and the hegemonic center, and for subversion of the scheme sex-gender manipulated by the matrix of heterosexuality.



# 3

## OUTRAGEOUS MANNERS IN *ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE*

### NAUSEATED

*Sir – As a playgoer of forty years standing, may I say that I heartily agree with Peter Pinnell in his condemnation of *Entertaining Mr Sloane*! myself was nauseated by this endless parade of mental and physical perversion. And to be told that such a disgusting piece of filth now passes for humour! Today's young playwrights take it upon themselves to flaunt their contempt for ordinary decent people. I hope that the ordinary decent people of this country will shortly strike back!*

*Yours truly,  
Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)*

JOE ORTON, *The Orton Diaries*

**Na**useated+ was a correspondence by Edna Welthorpe which followed the theme of another correspondence written by Peter Pinnell who opened the attack against the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* in *The Daily Telegraph*, where he depicted the sensation of a critic as snakes swarming around his ankles while watching it.<sup>51</sup> The interesting fact is that Edna Welthorpe was one of the many pseudonyms, along with the own Peter Pinnell, Jay Charkirs, Alan Crosby, and J. P. H. Joy, used by Joe Orton to mock the negative

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<sup>51</sup> Orton, Joe. *The Orton Diaries*. Edited by John Lahr. New York: Perennial Library, 1986. p. 281. All further references to the play come from this edition.

critics and middle-class theatergoers and to fan the scandal of his plays by writing letters to condemn them for immorality and ruthless excesses. The sensations *to be seated* and *to have snakes* warning around his ankles was actually the effect which Orton would like to provoke in his audience, since he liked to observe people's reaction to something they would consider shocking. Once, Orton said *to find people profoundly bad and irresistibly funny*<sup>52</sup>. This helps to understand his desire for subversion of norms and social conventions and its influence on his literary style, Ortonesque.

What could be filthy and disgusting in the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* at the point to shock *decent* people<sup>53</sup>? What can there be wrong with an apparently ordinary lower middle-class family composed by a retired father, a son who says he occupies a successful business position, a forty-one-year-old daughter who is dedicated to the household chores and the care of her old father; and Sloane, an orphan lodger?

In chapter two, I laid out how the representations of sex, gender, and desire are surrounded by a regulatory system which is produced to keep the phallogocentrism in the center of production of meaning and heterosexual hegemony. In this chapter, based on the theoretical presuppositions established in the previous one, I will present how the characters Kath and Ed are interpellated by a regulatory center to occupy a place inside the cultural intelligibility, and how they respond to Sloane's presence, which leads their desires and actions to subvert the traditional norms of the hegemonic center. Literary artifices that constitute the basis for the comic effect in the play and also contribute for the subversion of

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<sup>52</sup> *Idid*, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> For *decent* people, I presuppose people that are in conformity with the intelligibility of the norms and codes of morality of a traditional society and its social conventions.

representations of sex, gender and desire are delineated in the final part of this chapter.

The first act of the play opens with Kath lodging Sloane in her father's house. She does not imagine that he, an orphan of twenty-years-old, will trigger off a series of confrontations, and represent a threat to the apparent stability of the family. Kath found him in a library and brought him to her father's house. She felt an urge to behave like his 'mamma' and 'take care of him', because he was about the same age of her son who had been taken out from her and given to adoption. From this starting point onwards a number of questions are raised: What is Kath's necessity of being a mother? And her brother Ed, why does he treat her in a so aggressive way? Why must Sloane be entertained? What is Kemp's position in this familial circumstance? What is at stake in these familial relations? These are some questions that will help in the scrutiny of the play.

Before Sloane's arrival, Kath and Ed lived under their father's eyes of surveillance. Kemp acts as a representative of the regulatory system, and occupies the center of the familial structure from where he controls and assures that his family is in accordance to the code of morality required by the traditional family institution. Acting as a central agent of the regulatory system, Kemp inhibits the possibility of the *play*, and interpellates Ed and Kath to occupy a place inside the cultural intelligibility and to fulfill their expected roles established by the matrix of heterosexuality.

In the first chapter, I laid out Foucault's arguments about the disciplinary power with their principles of order and control which produce strategic methods of control to cause docility in the social body. Now, an extension of those principles of order and control over his offspring can be seen in Kemp. By remembering the

behavior of his son Ed, Kemp says, "He was a good boy. Played some amazing games as a youth. Won every goal at football one season. Sport mad, he was."<sup>54</sup> However, his utterance using verbs in the past means that Ed is not a good boy any more, and at the same time the fact of being a "sport mad" constitutes the representation of what a "good boy" is inside the cultural intelligibility. What could have happened to change Kemp's mind, to cause him not to speak to Ed since he was a teenager of seventeen years old? Kemp was a puritan man who used to go to church. He also was the responsible for the family, since there is no reference of a mother in the play. One day, he came back home unexpectedly and found Ed *committing some kind of felony* in the bedroom. Kemp talked to Ed no more after he had caught him red-handed. In the first act of the play, Kemp and Sloane are introduced to each other, and Sloane starts talking about the good atmosphere of the house, then asks Kemp about his children. In telling Sloane the incident

the basis of the Western system of representation, as I pointed out in the previous chapters. In that work, Foucault depicts the deployment of sexuality as one of the most important technologies of power planned to control and discipline human behavior, and which is worked out through a number of social institutions. These institutions become the main instrument for regulation of normative social activities which run to the benefit of power and to produce strategic methods of control of the social body. One of these methods is that Foucault called *pedagogization of children's sex* in which parents, educators, doctors, and psychologists take over the sexuality of children. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, that technology of sex is used by Kemp as a way to control his children, as shown in this extract of the play, when Kemp talks to Mr. Sloane about the fact that Ed has been caught red-handed committing felony:

SLOANE: That kind of thing happens often, I believe. For myself, I usually lock the door.

KEMP: I ~~do~~ removed the lock.

SLOANE: Anticipating some such tendencies on his part?

KEMP: *I ~~do~~ done it as a precautionary measure.*<sup>56</sup>

A room with a door without lock can be translated as a body under surveillance. Kemp's precautionary measure displays sexual desire as a threat that has to be contained. Kemp is a representative of the regulatory system, a puritan confessed as showed in his dialogue with Sloane,

SLOANE: A puritan, are you?

KEMP: Yes.<sup>57</sup>

Before Sloane's arrival, Kemp is the center which balances his family according to the moral values delimited inside the cultural law which is in the service of the maintenance of heteronormativity, guaranteeing their respectability. At the

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 73. Italics mine.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 71.

same time, Kemp's presence assured Ed's and Kath's sexual behavior in the patterns of the heterosexual matrix. As a controller center, Kemp interpellates them to act as intelligible individuals inside the intelligible culture. He is supportive of moral order and his presence in the house inhibits the possibility of Ed's and Kath's sexual growth; he maintains heteronormative power which assures heterosexual domination. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault points that the more modern Western society designed methods for dealing with the unspeakability of sex, the more sex was ushered into public domain as a scandal that had to be disguised. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, Kemp's censorship at the same time it interpellates both siblings to act as intelligible subjects, it instigates Ed's and Kath's sexuality.

Removing Ed's bedroom lock, and keeping Kath in domestic affairs was part of Kemp's censorship and surveillance in order to keep the familial reputability and to guarantee the coherence and continuity of the cultural matrix and the phallogocentrism in the center of the production of sexual, social, and moral representations. Through language, discourses are produced by a scheme of representation that is inherited and perpetuated, as it is seen in Ed's actions, who repeat the strategy of the patriarchal oppressor in a misogynistic way, as in this extract of the play:

ED: [ō ] There in that mirade of glass and concrete my  
colleagues and me will have a quiet drink  
before the business of the day.

KATH: Are your friends nice?

ED: Mature men.

KATH: No ladies?

*Pause.*

ED: What are you talking about? I live in a world of top  
decisions. We've no time for ladies.

KATH: Ladies are nice at a gathering.

ED: We don't want a lot of half-witted tarts.

KATH: They add colour and gaiety.

ED: Frightening everyone with their clothes.<sup>58</sup>

Ed, a thirty seven year-old man, is a misogynist homosexual, but keeps the image of a man required in a heteronormativity frame. Actually, he denies the homosexual stereotype, presenting his behavior embedded in the representation of the masculine, symbolized in the play by the uniform, leather, white T-shirt, male friendship, boxing, the army, and sports.

ED: You're interested in the army, eh? Soldiers, garrison towns, etc. Does that interest you?

SLOANE: Yes.

ED: Good, excellent. How old are you?

SLOANE: Twenty.<sup>59</sup>

[ō ]

ED: I might let you be my chauffeur.

SLOANE: Would you?

ED: (*laughs*). Wedī seeō I could get you a uniform.

Boots, pants, a guarantee 100 per cent no imitation jacketō anō erō a white brushed nylon T-shirtō with leather cap. (*laughs*.) Like that?<sup>60</sup>

In spite of his inscription into male norms of behavior, Ed's sexual desire is not addressed to heterosexuality. It goes towards the object which he should deny to be recognized as an intelligible man and to perpetuate the law of the *phallus*. Nonetheless, his masculine manners and the silence of his true sexual desires guarantee him a position in a world of top decisions+. This interpellation which he has to answer puts him in a position which guarantees the supremacy of phallogocentrism over women, since these representations are constructed by language, and in this case the signifier %top+ is used beyond its common usage. %Top+ is a word used inside the heteronormativity where the sexual relation reflects the language polarization and consequently the polarization of the system of representations. In this way, that signifier also designates an active position, and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 90.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

when saying that he lives in a world of *top decisions*, Ed crystallizes the representation in which men must occupy upper position, the position of someone who dominates, who is superior, and who has the right to penetrate. In this way, the polarity of language creates a social hierarchy which puts on the other side the one who is subdued, who is passive, and dominated: women in this case.

ED: I've got a certain amount of influence. Friends with money. I've got two cars. Judge for yourself. I generally spend my holidays in places where the bints have got rings through their noses. (*pause.*) Women are like banks, boy, breaking and entering is a serious business. Give me your word you're not vaginalatrous?<sup>61</sup>

The signifier *bints* represent a girl or a woman in a very offensive way. This representation is constructed through language, and in this context it means that not to be *vaginalatrous*<sup>62</sup> is the condition to occupy a place in the world of top decisions. Ed disgusts women, and his misogynist behavior is a reflection of the pallogocentric system of representation which permeates binary language and discourse. His discourses are filled with misogyny along the play, especially when addressing his sister Kath.

Kath is a spinster in her forties who occupies the lower position in the structure of the family, and she is in charge of all the household chores and the care of her retired father. She is overwhelmed by the mix of motherly desire and lust, and breaks off with the social role that she was expected to perform. By making sex before marriage and becoming a single mother, Kath was punished for transgressing the norms of social convention. Her child was taken from her and her sexuality was under surveillance by both her father and brother, who see her as a potential whore who can ruin the family's respectability:

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 87-88.

<sup>62</sup> Neologism probably created by Joe Orton in which the word *ōvaginaō* receives the Greek suffix *ōlatrousō*, whose meaning is: worship; excessively, fanatically devoted to someone or something; service paid to the gods.



ED: You've got to realize my position. I can't have my sister keeping a common kip. Some of my associates are men of distinction. They think nothing of tipping a fiver. That sort of person. If they realized how my family carry on I'd be banned from the best places. (*Pause.*) And another thing - you don't want them talking about you. And I can't guarantee my influence will keep them quiet. Nosy neighbours and scandal. Oh, my word, the looks you'd get.<sup>63</sup>

The image of Kath as a highly sexual female who can damage the reputability is a representation socially constructed by a strategy which finds in the family a locus for the interchange of the deployment of alliance and that of sexuality. That apparatuses of control can be seen in the play as what Foucault called *hysterization of women's bodies*, in which feminine body appears as saturated with sexuality. This technology of sex allows the control of all women by differentiating orderly bodies from those perceived as disorderly. Actually, Kath corroborates for that representation, since her behavior depicts her as an extremely sexual woman endowed with motherly desire, but her behavior appears as a reflection of the male-dominated system which is so many times misogynist and crystallizes the representation of women as having sexed and reproductive functions, that is, women can only be either mothers or whores, never both at same time.

Instances of misogyny can be seen from the part of Kath's father and brother. One of those traces is marked off by the apron she uses, which symbolizes her

was. That affair resulted in a pregnancy that spoiled Ed and Tommy's relationship. Kath's right of being a mother was denied by Ed's act of revenge, who broke with Tommy and took the baby for adoption. Her sexuality was silenced, as if she did not have the right to express it,

ED: Look in the glass, lady. Let's enjoy a laugh. (*he takes her to the mirror.*) What do you see?

KATH: Me.

ED: What are you?

KATH: My hair is nice. Natural. I'm mature, but still able to command a certain appeal.

ED: You look like death!<sup>64</sup>

[ō ]

ED: What have you to offer? You're fat and the crows-feet under your eyes would make you an object of terror.

Pack it in, I tell you. Sawdust up to the navel? You're nothing to lure any man.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the comic effect, the dialogue presents cruelty and verbal violence. Ed's usage of language shows more than a misogynist and revengeful behavior, it shows his competition for Sloane's possession. It is with Sloane's arrival that the *play* becomes possible and the center destabilized.

Sloane is a young man of twenty years old, about the same age as the son Kath was forced to give up. Kath took a sight of Sloane in a library and, taking him for a cultured and informed person, lodged him. His arrival at Kemp's house is a turning point for Ed's and Kath's sexual subversion and for the undermining of the regulatory center, occupied by the father figure. Sloane becomes a member of the family and his presence triggers off power relations in which several confrontations between Kemp and Sloane himself, between Kemp and Ed, and between Ed and Kath happen.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 143.

Sloane is chameleon-like, adapting to whatever situation he meets. His only motivation is to get a comfortable and good life through his good looks and physically fit body. Sloane realizes that both Ed and Kath need him for their desires to come true. First he lets Kath seduce him,

KATH: *ō* (*the snapshots slip from her hand.*) There! You've knocked the photos on the floor. (*Pause: he attempts to move; she is almost on top of him.*) Mr. Sloane *ō* (*Rolls on to him.*) You should wear more clothes, Mr. Sloane. I believe you're as naked as me. And there's no excuse for it. (*Silence.*) I'd be your mamma. I need to be loved. Gently. Oh! I shall be so ashamed in the morning. (*switches off the light.*) What a big heavy baby you are. Such a big heavy baby.<sup>66</sup>

In the morning, Kath has to play the role of housekeeper and to face her father's eyes of surveillance, but she oscillates between mother and whore and now she is being interpellated by Sloane to release both desirable positions and to deceive the regulatory center, as in this other extract of the play in which she tells Sloane about her pregnancy with such a high satisfaction and excitement for having achieved her wish of being a mother and a whore,

SLOANE: What have you bought me?

KATH: Mamma is going to have a *ō* (*Makes a rocking motion with her arms.*)

SLOANE: What? (*Pause.*) What?

KATH: A little . (*Looks over to Kemp. Makes the motion of rocking a baby in her arms. Purses her lips. Blows a kiss.*)

*Sloane sits up. Points to himself.*

KATH (*nods her head. Presses her mouth to his ear: whispers*): A baby brother.

KEMP: What are you having?

KATH: A *ō* bath, Dadda. You know that woman from the shops? (*Pause.*) You wouldn't believe what a ridiculous spectacles she's making of herself.

KEMP: Oh.

[*ō* ]

SLOANE: We mustn't let anyone know.

KATH: It's our secret. (*Pause.*) I'm excited.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. p. 101.

Kath's sexual behavior crosses the boundaries allowed for a mother and a son inside Western society; she breaks off the thought that women can only be mother or whore and transgresses the incest taboo. Her discourses and actions constitute literary artifices which contribute for the deconstruction of the representation of sexuality in Western society, especially in the sixties England. The dismantling of the incest taboo implies a series of other disruptions regarding sexual desire, and puts heteronormativity at stake. In chapter two, I discuss the psychoanalytic conception of the incest taboo which corroborates the construction of the sexual representations centered in heteronormativity. Through that conception, we can realize that our sexual, social and moral representations are embedded into a symbolic internalization of the laws that are, according to Foucault, internalized power structures which are a function of the world order we live in, bent on disciplining the subject.

If the solution of the *Oedipus complex*, according to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, leads to a consolidation of gender in two discrete categories: masculine and feminine, and thus constructing a matrix of gender identity centered in heterosexuality, which is configured as the only legitimate expression of desire, then the incest between Kath and Sloane displays the failure in that sex-gender system, since this taboo is originated from the configuration of the *Oedipus complex*. The boy, whose sexual drives addressed to his mother should be repressed, and should substitute the father identification for the loss of the object of love . and in this way, consolidate his masculinity and shift the object of his sexual desires from his mother to other women, cuts off this process and makes sex with his %amma+and also with her brother. On the other side, Kath is assuming the position of Sloane's mother and at same time his lover. The incest is present in the play, be it by means of symbolic

representation because apparently both Kath and Sloane do not have any parental relationship, or by a real incest because Kath had a child who was taken from her, a child in the same age of Sloane. It means that there is a possibility of Sloane be her son. Sloane and Kath disorganize the process that guarantees heteronormativity. When making sex with his mother, Sloane opens the possibility of multiple identifications, and gender identity starts being performative, not fixed to any disposition which tries to fix sexual identity within masculine or feminine positions. Characters' discourses express a parody of the unity of sex, gender and desire. Mr. Sloane's body reveals his discontinuity of that coherent and symmetrical representation by presenting his strange nature that provokes desire though:

KATH: O You've a skin on you like a princess. Better than on those tarts you see dancing about on the telly. I like a lad with a smooth body. *(Stops dabbing his leg. Takes up the bandage. Rises. Fetches a pair of scissors. Cuts bandage. Ties it round SLOANE's leg.)* Isn't it strange that the hairs on your legs should be dark?

SLOANE: Eh?

KATH: Attractive, though.

SLOANE: Dark?

KATH: Yes. You being a blond.

SLOANE: Oh, yes.

KATH: Nature's a funny thing.

Ed's behavior is another clue of the failure of the relation between the internalization of the father law and desire. There are several hints in the play that show Ed's identification with his father, his masculinity, his position as a man of business; yet, his sportive style, and even his misogyny, are suspicious as a vestige from patriarchal domination. However, his sexual inclination does not look for the lost object of love in other women; on the contrary, his sexual desire goes toward the object prohibited as taboo. As Sloane, Ed unbalances heteronormativity by seeking for the sex of other men. When realizing Ed's interest, Sloane seduces him by showing how invigorating his body is,

ED: you're fond of swimming?  
 SLOANE: I like a plunge now and then.  
 ED: Bodybuilding?  
 SLOANE: We had a nice little gym at the orphanage. Put me  
 in all the teams they did. Relays  
 [ō ]  
 ED: [ō ] Developing your muscles, eh? And character.  
 (Pause.) ō Well, well, well. (Breathless.) A little  
 bodybuilder are you? I bet you are ō (Slowly.) ō  
 do you ō (Shy.) exercise regular?  
 SLOANE: As clockwork.  
 ED: Good, good, Stripped?  
 SLOANE: Fully.  
 ED: Complete. (striding to the window.) How invigorating.  
 SLOANE: And I box. I'm a bit of a boxer.  
 ED: Ever done any wrestling?  
 SLOANE: On occasions.  
 ED: So, so.  
 SLOANE: I've got a full chest. Narrow hips. My biceps are .  
 ED: Do you wear leather ō next to the skin? Leather jeans,  
 say? Without ō ahō  
 SLOANE: Pants?<sup>68</sup>

Both Ed and Sloane deconstruct the essentialist notion of the body as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed and through which an appropriative or interpretative will determines a cultural meaning for itself. On the contrary, they cut off the determinism in which sex, gender, desire must combine symmetrically, where gender will repeat the stylization of his body, within which the rigid regulatory frame the social appearance of gender is controlled by a set of cultural laws. Ed's and Sloane's bodies even keep that cultural inscription by presenting them encoded inside the representations of masculinity through their male manners, but their desires and how they live their sexualities do not form a symmetrical and coherent equation. At same time, they break off the stereotype of a non-hetero man labeled as sensitive, passive or effeminate.

Judith Butler (1990) shows us that the body is not a ready surface expecting signification, but it is a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p.86-87.

maintained. For her, acts, gestures, and desire produce an illusion of an interior and organizing gender essence in which it is discursively maintained for the intentions of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory structure of compulsive heterosexuality. Her criticism exposes a fabricated reality taken as an interior essence, and she states that ~~%~~ the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true or false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity.<sup>69</sup> Butler conceives gender as performative in the sense that it has no ontological status apart from the several acts which establish its reality. Performativity releases gender categories from its naturalized interiority and surface, making possible the subversion of gender meanings.

Along the play, Ed is interpellated by a regulatory center to keep the representation of masculine. His acts and gestures reflect that fabricated reality which compartmentalizes and fixes identity to what is masculine or feminine, but his homosexual desire disorganizes the stability of gender by showing that a homosexual can be also masculine:

SLOANE: Let me live with you. I ~~l~~ wear my jeans out in your service. Cook for you.

ED: I eat out.

SLOANE: Bring you your tea in bed.

ED: Only women drink tea in bed.

SLOANE: You bring me my tea in bed, then. Any arrangement you fancy.<sup>70</sup>

Male etiquette does not allow a man to drink tea in bed, and if Ed's behavior reflects the compartmentalization of gender, his desire breaks off homo stereotype at same time it disorganizes gender by entering the intelligible and disorganizing its

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<sup>69</sup> BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. p. 136.

<sup>70</sup> ORTON, Joe. p. 135.

core in its fixed and stable status. It is with Sloane's performativity that the total subversion of sexual and gender identities happens, and it is with his interpellation to Ed and Kath that the *play* is made possible. Sloane's gender performativity makes gender identity relatively fluid and subject to constant negotiation. His gender and sexuality oscillate according to what the situation demands on him. For Judith Butler (1990) 'there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results.'<sup>71</sup> In this way, it does not matter if Sloane brings tea in bed, or takes it in bed; his behavior disrupts sexual and moral representations inside heteronormativity. Sloane's performativity interpellates the siblings' inner desires to break free from moral and sexual conventions. It is with that interpellation that the *play* becomes possible and the regulatory center disrupted. Firstly, Sloane destabilizes Kemp's position by creating a series of familial conflicts that culminate with Kemp's murder. With Sloane's presence in the house, Kemp starts losing power and being discredited by Ed,

KEMP: Let me tell you about the boy.

ED: I don't want to hear. (*Pause*) I'm surprised to find you spreading stories about the kiddy. Shocked. (SLOANE returns with a pile of clothes.) That's slander. You'd find yourself in a queer street. (SLOANE begins to pack the case.) Apologize. (KEMP shakes his head.) The old man's got something to say to you, boy.<sup>72</sup>

and by Kath,

KATH: I'm ashamed of you, Dad. Really ashamed. I think you behave very badly. Lie down, Mr Sloane. (*To KEMP.*) Go and get the Dettol and some water. Make yourself useful.  
KEMP shuffles off.  
I never realized he was antagonistic to you, Mr Sloane. Perhaps he's jealous. We were getting on so well. (*Pause.*) Is it hurting you?<sup>73</sup>

<sup>71</sup> BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. p. 25. Author's inverted commas.

<sup>72</sup> ORTON, Joe. p. 118.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 75.



Sloane nurtures the constant competition between the two siblings. This competition opens the *play* for Ed and Kath to release their anarchic desires and to subvert the norms. That triangle relation deconstructs the representations of a normative and hegemonic model of sexuality. The three characters show that gender, sex and desire are not tied, and they do not represent a unity as heteronormativity utters inside binary gender system. Sloane, Ed and Kath demonstrate that there is not a causal relation among sex, gender and desire, that desire does not reflect or express gender, nor gender reflects or expresses desire.

The triangle relationship among Ed, Sloane and Kath reverses the hierarchical and binary relations between a couple inside heteronormativity in which man is always characterized as a referential of meaning. In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality: The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault (1998) makes a reflection about the isomorphism between sexual relation and social relation in the Greek culture which was important to the mapping of how sexual conduct became object of a moral concern from the Greek thought to Christianity. I consider relevant to develop that principle here to depict later the triangle subversion of the neat binary of heteronormativity. Foucault points out that sexual relation is always conceived according to the model of penetration within a polarity that opposes activity and passivity, and that this relation reflects by analogy the same categories of social hierarchies in the attribution of partners' role in the sexual relation. In this way, sexual relation happens in the same kind of relation between a superior, the one who dominates, subdues and wins, and an inferior, the one who is dominated, subdued and that is won, in this case woman, boy, and slave. Foucault mentions this isomorphism principle to explain the moral conception in the Greek's use of pleasure,

and of course that conduct cannot be level with sexuality in modernity. This because in ancient Greek civilization, sexual relation was a co[(sexua)-1eer

sexual role, man as active, dominant, and woman as passive, subdued to his desires. The relation must follow the equation in which sex, gender, and desire are tied symmetrically; one element presupposes the other. However, Ed's and Kath's sexual identities subvert the norms and achieve liberation with Sloane's presence in the house. The three characters form a triangle which destroys the binary sex-gender pattern. There is no more a couple, there is a triangle relation and their desires are not in accordance with their gender and sex, or with what is morally permitted inside the normative system. Both siblings are unmarried at an age that society expects them to be married: Ed is thirty-seven and Kath is forty-one. According to their discourses in the play, Ed and Kath seem to be tied into a relationship of eternal dispute and revenge. There is a certain dimension in which the antagonistic relation between them could also be considered incestuous, since Ed can only work sexuality with men that are also involved sexually with his sister. It was this way with Tommy, his friend, and it is now so with Sloane. Ed, Kath and Sloane are connected as a *ménage à trois*, a French expression for 'household for three', or still 'threeosome' that means 'three people considered as a unit', that is to say, a pervert route for Ed to reach his interdicted sister.

ED: He loves you?

KATH: No, I didn't say that. But he calls me mamma. I love him 'cause I have no little boy of my own. And if you send him away I shall cry like the time you took my real baby.

ED: You were wicked then.

KATH: I know.

ED: Being rude. Ruining my little matie. Teaching him nasty things. That's why I sent it away. (*Pause.*) You're not doing rude things with this kiddy, are you, like you did with Tommy?<sup>74</sup>

This incestuous relation places the characters outside the intelligibility of the heteronormative matrix. They are assigned at margin and in this way, it is appropriate

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 107.

to say that they work as *supplement*, in Derridean concept of the word. Their existence is necessary to justify normative sex-gender system and to guarantee its supremacy over those who escape this convention. Because there is a lack in what is supplemented, supplement becomes the precondition for the existence of pretense originality; heterosexuality as norm in this case. As supplements, Ed, Kath and Sloane point to the lack and incoherence in the core of heterosexual hegemony and destabilize that hegemonic center by showing that desire is not stable, fixed, or symmetrically coherent; that gender does not follow from sex, and practices of desire do not follow from either sex or gender.

Nevertheless, the threesome relation is marked off by conflicts generated by disputes between Ed and Kath for Sloane's possession. Along the play Ed's discourse regarding Kath shows his misogyny and contempt for her, but at the same time he needs her to accomplish his sexual desires. Many times Ed tries to persuade Sloane not desire Kath,

ED: Getting fat as a pig, she is.  
 SLOANE: Is she?  
 ED: Not noticed?  
 SLOANE: No.  
 ED: I have.  
 SLOANE: How old is she?  
 ED: Forty-one. (*Shrugs.*) Forty-two. She ought to slim. I'd advise that.  
 SLOANE: She's old  
 ED: She's like a sow. Though she is my sister.  
 SLOANE: She's not bad.  
 ED: No?  
 SLOANE: I don't think so.<sup>75</sup>

Kath keeps her gender role as the normative convention asks for, a defenseless, and fragile woman. However, she plays voluntarily the mother-lover role. She follows submissive to her brother Ed until the play achieves its climax in the third act, when Sloane murders her father, Kemp. Sloane acts as a mixture of

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 110.

angelical features and devilish trickeries that involve Kath and Ed in an articulation of desires. Sloane conquers Kath, who confesses he has a skin *like a princess* and she likes *a lad with a smooth body*, and Ed with his fitness, chest, and biceps, a bodybuilder in leather jeans. But in deed Sloane is interested in taking a good life, in comfort, no matter how he has to adapt his sexual and gender identities, he performs whatever he thinks that fits into the situation. Sloane uses his trickeries to persuade Kemp, who knew whom he really was, and let flourish his intent,

KEMP: You're bad.

SLOANE: I'm an orphan.

KEMP: Get away from me. Let me alone.

SLOANE (*puts the stick into KEMP's hand*): I trust you,  
Pop. Listen. Keep quiet.

*Silence.*

It's like this see. One day I leave the home. Stroll along. Sky blue. Fresh air. They'd found me a likeable permanent situation. Canteen facilities. Fortnight's paid holiday. Overtime? Time and a half after midnight. A staff dance each year. What more could one wish to devote one's life to? I certainly loved that place. The air round Twickenham was like wine. Then one day I take a trip to the old man's grave. Hic Jacets in profusion. Ashes to ashes. Alas the fleeting. The sun was declining. A few press-ups on a tomb belonging to a family name of Cavaneagh, and I left the graveyard. I thumbs a lift from a geyser who promises me a bed. Gives me a bath. And a meal. Very friendly. All you could wish he was, a photographer. He shows me one or two experimental studies. An experience for the retina and no mistake. He wanted to photo me. For certain interesting features I had that he wanted the exclusive right of preserving. You know how it is. I didn't like to refuse. No harm in it I suppose. But then I got to thinking o I knew a kid once called MacBride that happened to. Oh, yes o so when I gets to think of this I decide I got to do something about it. And I gets up in the middle of the night looking for the film see. He has a lot of expensive equipment about in his studio see. Well it appears that he gets the wrong idea. Runs in. Gives a shout. And the long and the short of it is I loses my head which is a thing I never ought to a done with the worry of them photos an all. And I hits him, I hits him.

*Pause.*

He must have had a weak heart. Something like that I should imagine. Definitely should have seen his doctor before that. I wasn't to know was I? I'm not a blame.

Innocent, immoral, angelical, diabolical, and violent, Sloane was not seduced by Kath and Ed. He was not naïve. He was a volunteer in the siblings' dispute for the accomplishment of their anarchic desires. The regulatory center, Kemp, can be in the

way of the opening of the *play*. In this way, Sloane makes his second crime, murdering him. The subversion of the rules that prison Ed and Kath in the sex-gender system depends on the realization of their sexual self-interests, and Sloane is the guarantee of that idealization. The desire for the subversion of the center is presented in the text mark, addressing the three characters' actions, after Sloane knocks and kicks Kemp, provoking a collapse that would take him to death a little later; Kath loosens Kemp's collar and asks somebody for fetching his tablets: *Nobody moves.*<sup>76</sup>

Kemp's death opens the possibility of the *play*. The absence of the authority also ignites the siblings' competition for Sloane's sexual services. But if Sloane is the cause of the conflicts in the family, he is also the solution for domestic, sexual, and legal problems of all three characters: for Kath's motherly and sexual needs, her pregnancy and neighborhood gossip; Ed's opportunity to come out of the closet, and to solve his problem of getting Kemp's signature for admission to a home for the elderly; and for Sloane himself to hide his murders and to guarantee a comfortable life. But the opening of the *play* brings a change in power relations of the three characters. In the first and second acts, Sloane, in realizing the two siblings' sexual interest in him, felt in power of the circumstances, and his machinations assured him to be entertained. At the beginning of the third act, he still felt power over his choices. When Ed discovers Sloane's murder, he says that Sloane will face the authorities, and that he has no choice, Sloane answers: *I'll decide what choice I have.*<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, Ed keeps himself determined to call the law and assumes the control over Sloane,

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 128.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

SLOANE: You wouldn't put me away, would you?  
 ED: Without a qualm.<sup>78</sup>

By saying "without a qualm", Ed shows that he has moral principles, even if these principles are not in accordance with his actions, and this fact establishes a discontinuity between morality and sex. His sexual behavior does not interfere with his moral conduct, "I'm a citizen of this country. My duty is clear. You (to Sloane) must accept responsibility."<sup>79</sup> However, Ed lets his anarchic desire talk louder, but only after Sloane accepts Ed's principles,

SLOANE: (*Sits beside ED. Lays a hand on his knee.*) I accept responsibility.  
 ED: Do you?  
 SLOANE: Fully.  
 [ō ]  
 ED: One thing I wanted to give you . my principles. Oh, I'm disillusioned. I feel I'm doing no good at all.  
 SLOANE: I'm very bad. Only you can help me on the road to a useful life. [ō ]<sup>80</sup>

Both Ed and Kath adopt conventional moral attitudes and present themselves as sincere and respectable persons, although their sense of morality does not reflect in their actions. When Sloane and Ed try to persuade Kath to hide the true fact about Kemp's death, saying that Ed would give an alibi to Sloane, she states firmly, "It's not in accordance with my ideas of morality."<sup>81</sup> In addition, her sense of morality requires a reserved manner. When she, as a real mamma, advises Sloane not to be violent and asks the reason for hitting her father, she says: "O. you shouldn't resort to violence, dear. (*Pause.*) Did he insult you? (*Pause.*) Was it a bad word? (*Pause.*) I don't expect you can tell me what it was. *I'm blush.*"<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 134.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. p. 135.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 144.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 128. Italics mine.

Although Ed and Kath seem to be two-faced, they are not. They are sincere when they talk about their moral principles; however, their actions do not match them. It is their subversive desire that disrupts the hypocrisy of the code of morality they are recruited to by the dominant culture, since sex is linked to morality established by dominant culture ruled by heteronormativity, which shapes Western representation of sexuality. Moreover, there is not a code of morality anymore to block Ed and Kath to accomplish their desire. Now, to do such a thing is a matter of survival for the three characters. To guarantee their possession over Sloane, the two siblings start a verbal confrontation in which it is clear that, despite the dominant culture's constant interpellations, Ed's and Kath's gender and sexual identities do not fit the heteronormative scheme.

ED: He's lost with you.  
 KATH: I gave him everything.  
 ED: No backbone. Spineless.  
 KATH: He's lovely with me. Charming little baby he is.  
 ED: No, he's soft. You softened him up.  
 KATH: I gave him three meals a day. Porridge for breakfast.  
       Meat and two veg for dinner. A fry for tea.  
       And cheese for supper. What more could he want?  
 ED: Freedom.  
 KATH: He's free with me.  
 ED: You're immoral.  
 KATH: It's natural.  
 ED: He's clean-living by nature; that's every man's right.  
 KATH: What are you going to give him?  
 ED: The world.  
 KATH: (*comes round the case, looks in*). The state of this  
       case. Mr Sloane, dear, you can't even pack. See how  
       he needs me in the smallest things? Can't manage  
       without a woman.  
 ED: Let him try.  
 KATH: Women are necessary.<sup>83</sup>

Ed's and Kath's discourses reproduce the representation of cultural law, insofar as, according to Judith Butler, one cannot refuse the interpellating call, for it is

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 141.



through interpellation that the subject is constituted. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler's argument can elucidate the effects of that reproduction in both siblings:

The rules that govern intelligibility identity, i.e., that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an *agency*, rules that are partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, operate through *repetition*. Indeed, when the subject is said to be constituted, that means simply that the subject is a consequence of a certain rule-governed discourse that intelligibly invokes identity. The subject is not *determined* by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects. In a sense, all signification takes place within the orbit of the compulsion to repeat; *agency*, then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition. If the rules governing signification not only restrict, but enable the assertion of alternative domains of cultural intelligibility, i.e., new possibilities for gender that contest the rigid codes of hierarchical binarisms, then it is only *within* the practices of repetitive signifying that a subversion of identity becomes possible.<sup>84</sup>

When Ed utters that he is a citizen of his country, he is arguing that contemporary citizenship is sexed, privatized, and self-disciplined by a cultural law that shapes sex, gender and desire. His conception of masculinity is shaped by the cultural representation that man must be the *backbone*, the *spine*. Ed's gender identity is masculine; he feels male and acts according to male gender-role. However, his desire disorganizes that essentialist concept of masculine. It subverts the mimetic representation of sex, gender, and desire, by addressing his sexuality to same-sex persons. Ed's sexual identity disrupts the naturalization of a masculine stereotype that serves of interest to the dominant group in society. On the other hand, Kath reinforces the hegemonic representation that women are necessary for *the smallest things*, but her behavior breaks the dichotomy of mother/whore, as presented previously, and keeps her principles of morality. Now, Kath is led by her desire, and without a center she gains the right of decision, she gains voice so that she can fight for the accomplishment of her necessities, *she shall never under any*

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<sup>84</sup> BUTLER, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. p. 145. Author's italics.

circumstances allow anyone to perjure me. It was murder.<sup>85</sup> When Sloane said that he will go with Ed, she points to external elements when trying to understand such decision, not to her sexuality. It means that her incestuous relationship with Sloane is something natural that does not affect her morality. What could be wrong? Sloane had everything,

SLOANE: I'm going with Ed.  
 ED *nods, smacks SLOANE's shoulder, laughs.*  
 KATH: Is it the colour of the curtains in your room?  
 SLOANE: No.  
 KATH: Is it because I'm pregnant?  
 SLOANE: No. Better opportunities. A new life.<sup>86</sup>

Sloane presents a rationalized bisexuality. His desire is not addressed to a male or female body, to one or other gender or sex, but to a better life. To fulfill his desire, Sloane can perform his sexuality and gender as long as the situation satisfies his necessities. Sloane's performativity shows that sex and gender are produced within a social ideology. He does not only interpellate Ed and Kath to release their desires, but he is also interpellated by them to perform a sex-gender role that disrupts normative sex-gender system. With Kath getting control over her decisions what led her to disputing him at the same level as Ed, Sloane falls down in his trap:

KATH: I was never subtle, Mr Sloane. If you go with Eddie, I'll tell the police.  
 SLOANE: If I stay here he'll do the same.  
 ED: It's what is called a dilemma, boy. You are on the horns of it.<sup>87</sup>

Sloane's solution for his troubles is always violent. He beats Kath and uses verbal violence, even though Ed asks him not to use physical violence: "Support me, you mare! Support me!"<sup>88</sup> But Kath is only worried with her teeth; she hates people

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<sup>85</sup> ORTON, Joe. p. 144.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 141.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

who are careless with their dentures, and her teeth are an important complement for her sexual appeal, since Sloane had mentioned in the first act that he disgusted her without her teeth,

KATH: My teeth! (*She claps a hand over her mouth.*) My teeth. (SLOANE *flings her from him. She crawls round the floor, searching.*) He broke my teeth! Where are they?<sup>89</sup>

Kath does not give up Sloane; she says *I'd still forgive and forget.*<sup>90</sup> Even Sloane's violent and aggressive way to address her, as he says *She won! The bitch has won!*<sup>91</sup> and in asking Ed *Persuade her. Cut her throat, but persuade her!*<sup>92</sup>, she forgives him: *It's his nerves. He doesn't know what he's doing.*<sup>93</sup> Indeed, survival is the only moral principle in this obstinate dispute in which Kath turns the game in her favor. She presents an inappropriate behavior towards Sloane's offences, *Help me up, Mr Sloane. Thank you, baby. See, Ed, he hasn't lost respect for me.*<sup>94</sup> Her disguise face on the violence and aggressiveness is not a matter of right or wrong, but a matter of having her necessity of mother/lover guaranteed.

Foucault had already stated in *The Order of Discourse* that power is a diffuse field in which there is a productive confrontation. With the father's death, the confrontation between Kath and Ed assumes equal position in which the siblings can achieve an agreement and share their object of desire, Mr. Sloane:

ED: Then let's no more threats. You support him?  
 KATH: As long as he stays here.  
 ED: You've had him six months; I'd have him the next six.  
     I'm not robbing you of him permanently.  
 KATH: Aren't you?  
 ED: No question of it. (*Pause.*) As long as you're prepared to accept the idea of partnership.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 146.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 147.

KATH: For how long?  
 ED: As long as the agreement lasts.  
 KATH: How long is that?  
 ED: By the half-year.  
 KATH: That's too long, dear. I get so lonely.  
 ED: I've got no objections if he visits you from time to time.  
 Briefly. We could put it in the contract. Fair enough?  
 KATH: Yes.  
 ED: I'll bring him over myself in the car. Now, you'll be  
 more or less out of action for the next three months. So  
 shall we say till next August? Agreed?  
 KATH: Perfect, Eddie. It's very clever of you to have  
 thought of such a lovely idea!<sup>95</sup>

In this part of the play, their agreement is established in a contract that subverts Western heterosexual contract.<sup>96</sup> A coherence and stable continuity among sex, gender, and desire is expected, and to guarantee that contract, that continuity must materialize itself in the heterosexual union between a man and a woman. Disorganizing that stable and fixed contract of the hegemonic group, Ed, Kath, and Sloane now form a triangle union based on a contract in which a homosexual, a bisexual and a nymphomaniac<sup>97</sup> are tied at least for *just a few years*<sup>98</sup>, as Ed says in the last part of the play. This triangle contract sustains the accomplishment of their anarchic desires in an incestuous relationship which disrupts the linking among sex, gender and desire without jeopardizing their moral principles, but that subverts conventional morality.

If Ed's, Kath's and Sloane's actions are subversive, not less subversive is the form of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. The literary artifices used in this Ortonesque play not only dismantle normative sex-gender system and conventional morality, but also

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 148-149.

<sup>96</sup> *Heterosexual contract* is a concept that Monique Wittig develops in her book *The Straight Mind*. She understands the institution of heterosexuality as the founding basis of the male-dominated social orders. In this thesis, I appropriated the term *heterosexual contract* keeping the meaning used by Judith Butler, who coined Wittig's term in her book *Gender Trouble* to characterize the hegemonic model of gender intelligibility which only recognizes bodies that are coherent with the naturalization of sex, gender and desires.

<sup>97</sup> I am not using the term "nymphomaniac" in a pathological or pejorative sense, but to express Kath's lust.

<sup>98</sup> Orton, Joe. p. 148.

reinvent conventional comedy genre. Analyzing the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* as a literary text, as proposed in the introduction of this thesis, it is easy to recognize a beginning, a middle which goes towards an outcome. Nevertheless, this conventional structure is far from being a well-made play in the sense that it pleases the audience's tastes and expectations. On the contrary, what makes *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* a subversive play is the parody which Joe Orton does of English everyday life and deep instincts denied by morality, by exposing sex and violence as the elementary effects of an artificial world. The logic of the plot in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* escapes the conventionality of comedy of manners, since the play not only satirizes the hypocrisies and harshness of middle English class, but also presents a collapse of human values and civilizing qualities characterized in the absence of coherence between characters' words and actions. Many times Ed and Kath are interpellated by their principles of morality, but act guided by their desires. The comic is built in the balance between the seriousness of Ed's and Kath's sense of duties, respectability and conventional morality with their ignited dispute for Sloane's sexual services, and also through verbal confrontation which is continuous in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*. Sex and violence are important elements used to create the comic effect in play. Nevertheless, this violence resides much more in language and style than in action. But sex is aggressive and subversive. It challenges the norms established by the cultural law of heteronormativity which dictates what is moral and immoral, and which fixes sex, gender, and desire as a symmetrical and coherent unity.

*Entertaining Mr. Sloane* with its apparent simple structure, well divided into three acts, which I can say to be the organization of beginning, middle and end, deceives and mocks at the middle-class audience, or reader in this case, who think

art installs order in their collapsed world, by using anarchic desires to disturb their conventional moral response. If the plot of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is organized, even if it be deceitful, it denies stylized traditions used to construct traditional comedies. The play has a special style, the one which represents the author's subversiveness and disdain for stereotypes or conventionality,

The style isn't superimposed. It's me. You can write stylised comedy in inverted commas, because the style must ring true to the man. If you think in a certain way and you write true to yourself, which I hope I am, then you will get a style, a style will come out. You've only got to be sitting on a bus and you'll hear the most stylised lines. People think I write fantasy, but I don't; some things may be exaggerated or distorted in the same way that painters distort and alter things, but they're realistic figures. They're perfectly recognisable. I don't like the discrimination against style that some people have. [6 ] I write in a certain way because I can express things that I couldn't

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One of the themes satirized in the sub-genre comedy of manners is marriage. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, marriage is radicalized; it is parodied with a threesome, or *ménage-à-trois*, relationship. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* parodies heteronormativity and satirizes sex-gender system by presenting characters whose actions and manners are realistically performed. They access intelligibility and disorganize the rules that govern sex, gender and desire. The decentering of the hegemonic norm leads them from a supplement position to occupy a place in the network of significations. *Differànce* in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* permits the characters to manipulate their desires, since sex, gender, and desire do not constitute a relation, fixity and stability any more; they are performative.

# CONCLUSION

**T**hus ends my thesis, in which I endeavored to present my reading of the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* so as to identify, with the help of the theoretical apparatuses presented in the Introduction, the characteristics of what I have called the *Ortonesque* style of the play. As it subverts the conventional sexual norms of behavior of the English middle-class in the sixties, I focused my attention on studies about sexuality. In this sense, Michael Foucault's work *The History of Sexuality*, first volume, proved essential for the understanding of how sex enters into discourse and becomes a source of knowledge/power for the control and regulation of human beings's sexual behavior. Not less important was the critique raised by Judith Butler, whose criticism is taken as an important support to Queer Theory. Butler's concept of *performativity* helped me to pinpoint the failures in the pretense stability of sex-gender system and to show the dismantling of the heteronormativity. Deconstruction was useful as a strategy of reading in which mechanisms of signification were understood, thus interpreting how language produces our system of representation of sex and morality, forming the cultural essentialisms.

The Ortonesque play in question is more than a piece of literary work that was staged, it is a weapon against the hypocrisies of the English middle-class society which Joe Orton wanted to shock and scandalize through his personal style. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is a



sexual-political play which was a bludgeon in Joe Orton's hands, which he transferred to the characters' actions and behaviors. His uses of irony in the parody of English middle-class manners was a response to the sexual conservatism of modern society in compartmentalized sex. His tricks, mockery and cynicism, which composed the Ortonesque style, destabilized conventional models of behavior. Parody was Orton's aesthetic, and the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* was a challenge to sexual norms, and at the same time to normative values of the English middle-class in the sixties.

Sex is crucial in Joe Orton's play. In *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, sexuality is aggressive, subversive in the sense that it disrupts the repressive censorship of the father, a figure that is mocked as a repudiation of all conventional values. Nevertheless, aggressiveness and subversiveness are produced through the comic effect, in a parody of English normative sexual behavior which makes it possible for *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* to declare its independence of representations of the conventional sex-gender system. Aesthetic anarchy releases sexuality from a world of morality. Comedy is the way that Orton has to provoke an impact on his audience, as he says, "laughter is a serious business and comedy a weapon more dangerous than tragedy."<sup>101</sup> The Ortonesque play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* undoubtedly succeeds in putting the heteronormative rules at stake.

The matter of representation of sexual identities was an important issue for the study of the play. At present times, when discussions about sex, gender, and sexuality take on a place of distinction for rethinking the discourses originated from the heteronormative/patriarchal system which have been dominating the patterns of thinking identity in modernity, Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* offers an important contribution for the questioning of normative scheme of representation of sex and morality which establish

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<sup>101</sup> As quoted by John Lahr's introduction in: Orton, Joe.

patterns of behavior, values, and desires by using literality as a way of critique. It is interesting to observe that the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* promotes issues that are on the basis of contemporary theory of sexuality, such as *performativity* as a means of subversion of the heteronormative scheme proposed by Judith Butler.

Taking into account that our experiences, and our knowledge of the world are based on a symbolic system of representation embedded in heteronormative/patriarchal ideology, the signification network of social relations determines, in this way, who is excluded or not, who is subversive or not, based on parameters of the hegemonic center. It is through the scope of English middle-class and some theatrical critics that Joe Orton and his play are marked off as subversive.

Deconstruction as a strategy of reading shows that language is the basis for any representation, and it helps to disclose the failure in the existence of an original meaning, and in this way, the failure in the pretense stability of sexual identity in its intersections of sex, gender, and desire. Deconstruction also shows how our system of representation is shaped by regulatory centers in the form of institutions, such as psychoanalysis presented in this thesis. As language is embedded in binary oppositions which control the production of meaning within culture, identities are inscribed in a classificatory system, such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, male/female, which is at the service of a dominant ideology. Those

express their behavior, promote the indeterminacy of meaning regarding sexuality, since their desires break the fixed continuation involving sex, gender and desire of the heteronormative tradition. Through *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, Joe Orton de-compartmentalizes sexual categories and presents characters who represent subjects whose sexuality is more flexible.

The comic in *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* parodies normative sexuality in the sixties England by presenting a man (Ed) whose manners share in male gender-role, but whose desire disrupts heteronormativity; another man (Sloane) whose sexuality can go from one pole to the other, negotiating his sexual identity according to the situations required on him; and a woman (Kath) who breaks the dichotomy mother/whore by showing that woman is not an object of pleasure, but can make choices and be the subject of her sexuality. Another fact is the mixture of amusement and disturbance that both Ed and Kath provoke in keeping their moral principles, the same moral principles established by the English middle-class that they transgress. Not less amusing and disturbing is Sloane's refusal to feel guilty or ashamed of his crimes and behavior.

The play shows that there is no center able to encompass or sustain the status of original or transcendental meaning. Kemp is dead and now Ed, Kath and Sloane as *supplements* can move freely and occupy a place in the network of significations. Hegemonic essentialisms of the sex-gender system are over in the play. The conventional notions of sex in two discrete categories are dismantled by the discontinuity of sex-gender-desire, which is reconfigured in the play. Here is my answer to the question posed in the second chapter of this thesis, about which compartments could Ed, Kath and Sloane be inserted into: I believe that our binary language can not cope with sexual difference, and that it is through subversion of this binary language that the characters assert their sexuality. Judith Butler's concept of *performativity* is fundamental to understand in which ways they pass from unintelligible

beings to subjects of their desires. If one insists in classifying the sexuality of the three subversive characters of the play by using binary language, one can say that Ed is male, he has a masculine gender-role and homosexual desire, but he feels as a man and adopts hetero manners. Kath is female, her gender-role is based on a misogynist representation of women, and her sexual identity is heterosexual. Apparently, she shares with the essentialist representation of sex, but at the end she turns the play in her favor and shows that a woman can be a mother and a lover at the same time, and be also the owner of her sexual desires. Now, Kath keeps her role through an active voice which takes part of discourse. Sloane, as Judith Butler points out in her argument about performativity, is ða free floating artificeö. He is independent of constructs of sex-gender. Even if under the label of bisexual, his sexuality challenges the longstanding hetero/homo binary division by the indeterminacy of the sign. Sloane embraces multiple desires and identifications. Nevertheless, if the characters are compartmentalized in the conventional system of sex-gender, they will continue as intelligible beings, and this is not the purpose of the play, but the subversiveness.

It is interesting that the Ortonesque style of *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* mocks not only at the conventional sex, but destroys representations that are at the basis of our understanding of sexual identification. Both Freudian *Oedipal complex* and its Lacanian sequel, the *Name-of-the-Father*, are demolished by the exposition of the failure in the propositions of both theories in explaining gender and sexuality consolidations through heterosexuality. Psychosexual development is at the base of our scheme of sexual representations. And this kind of representation forms essentialisms that will constitute what is intelligible or unintelligible within culture. And in this way, the classification of what is unintelligible is asserted inside culture in the form of stereotyping. Sexual stereotyping is part of the maintenance of the symbolic order which sets up boundaries between ðnormalö, ðintelligibleö, ðdeviantö, and ðpervertedö. *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* disrupts that strategy of the hegemonic

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intelligible manners. This is how parody works in the Ortonesque play, and how it provokes the comic effect.

The Ortonesque style rebels against all institutionalized behavior. Foucault's study on sexuality asserts that our sexuality is censored by technologies of sex developed to control and regulate body and play out fuses

*Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is a play that subverts sexuality and comedy of manners. This double subversion was achieved through Orton's personal style which presents anarchy as an aesthetic form. The characters present a response for the desolated and labeled world which Joe Orton mocks through his unique style.

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## APPENDIX A: A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Kingsley Orton was born in Leicester, England, in 1 January, 1933 to a poor working class family. He was the eldest of four children. His father, William Kingsley Orton, worked for Leicester council as a gardener, and his mother, Elsie, as a machine operator in the hosiery factories. Orton's family relationship was not so affectionate, and much of the hypocrisy and pretensions of his parents finds echoes in many works of him. Joe Orton's life can be divided into three parts: his first seventeen years in Leicester city; then his going to London in order to study at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) in 1950, when he meets Kenneth Halliwell, his lover, and goes to live with him; and finally his progressive and short period of success that ends when he is murdered on August 9, 1967, by his lover.

Joe Orton's family lacked communication, and this fact did not allow them to have a warmth relationship. His mother did not know about his talents for dramatic arts and enrolled him at Clark's college, a private commercial school. But two years later he joined *Leicester Dramatic Society*, *Bats Players*, and *Vaughan Players*, all dramatic groups of Leicester. After he had had elocution lessons to deal with a lisp, he went to London and started studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, where he met Halliwell, who provided him with literary education by introducing him to classical writers such as Aristophanes and Voltaire. Together, Orton and Halliwell wrote four unpublished novels named *The Last Days of Sodom*, *The Boy Hairdresser*, *The Mechanical Womb* and *The Silver Bucket*. Through these works, it was clear that Halliwell was not endowed with the same talent as Joe Orton's.

From 1964 to 1967, Orton got public recognition, and his desire of being well-known came true. But his promising and short career ended tragically in August 9, 1967, when his lover, Kenneth Halliwell, taken over by envy of Orton's intellectual independence and success, bludgeoned him to death with a hammer, committing suicide soon afterwards by taking an overdose of pills. That day, Joe Orton had an appointment with Richard Lester at Twickenham Studios to discuss *Up Against It*, a film script for the Beatles. Besides his plays, Joe Orton also left a diary, which he started writing in December 1966. Orton's *Diaries* display his challenge of an oppressive English society, his relationship with Halliwell and with his family, his opinions about other writers and about his own production.

In his short successful career and life he produced enough to become 'somebody'. His only novel, *The Vision of Gombold Proval*, which was published later as *Head to Toe*, was written in 1961. In August 1963, he sold the play *The Ruffian on the Stair*, which was originally *The Boy Hairdresser*, to BBC Radio. In the same year, he started writing the play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, which was firstly staged in June 1964 at New Arts Theatre in London. In 1964, he finished *The Good and Faithful Servant*, and from June to December of the same year, he wrote *Loot*, opened at Arts Theatre on 1 February 1965. From July to September, he wrote *The Erpingham Camp* which was aired on Rediffusion Television on 27 June 1966 and staged at the Royal Court Theatre on 21 August. In 1966, *Funeral Games* was aired on Yorkshire Television on 25 August. In this year, he started writing his *Diaries*. And in the year of his murder, 1967, he wrote a script film for the Beatles, *Up Against It*, which was rejected by their manager Brian Epstein, who thought it was not suitable for the Beatles; and ended his last play *What the Butler Saw*, which was staged only on 5 March 1969 at the Queen's Theatre in London.

## **APPENDIX B: FILMOGRAPHY**

**1 PRICK UP YOUR EARS** - This film is the story of the life and violent death of British playwright Joe Orton, starred by the actor Gary Oldman. Directed by Stephen Frears. Release on 8 May 1987 (USA).

**2 ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE** - Release on 11 September 1970 (West Germany).

Language: English. Directed by Douglas Hickox. Writing credits: Clive Exton. Joe Orton (play). Cast:

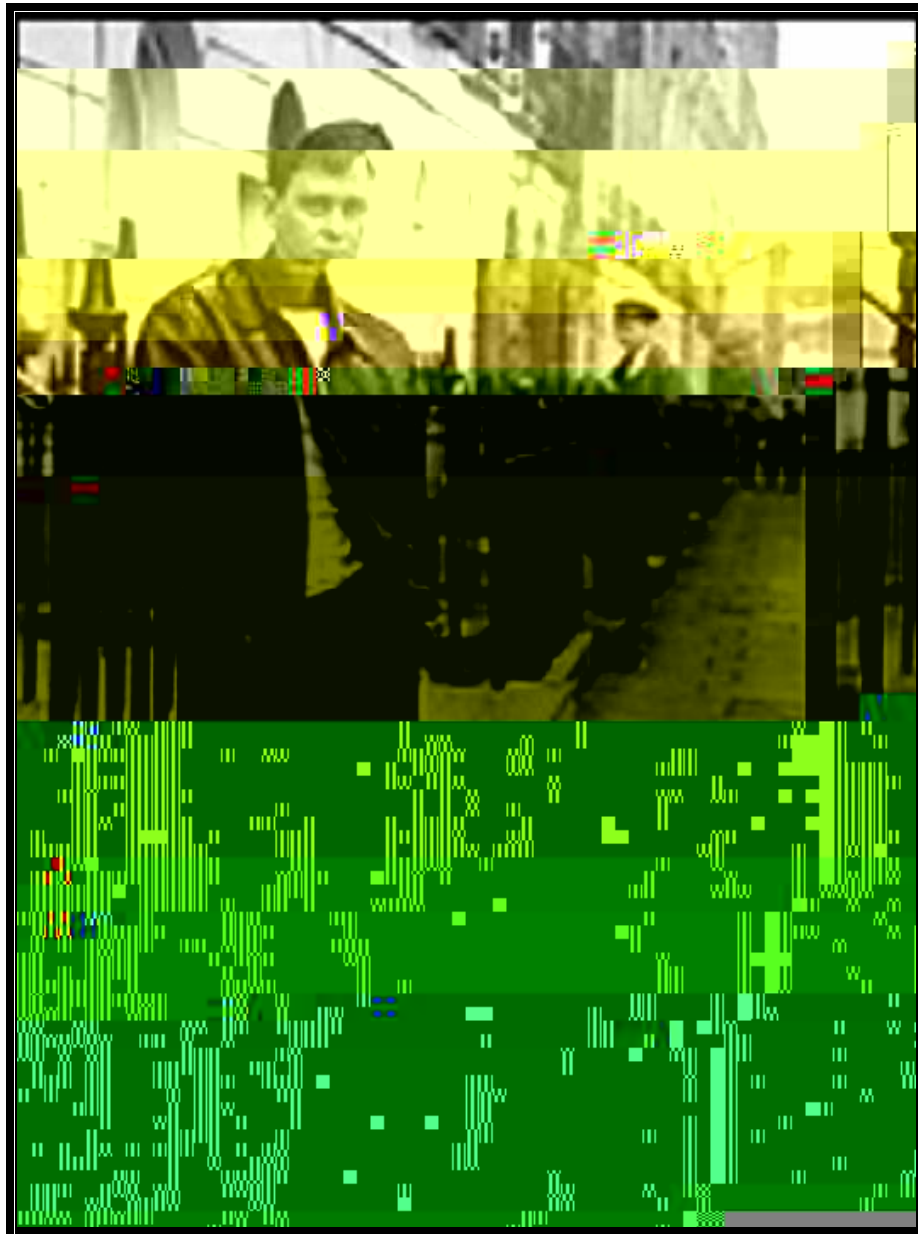
Beryl Reid ó Kath

Harry Andrews ó Ed

Peter McEnery ó Mr. Sloane

Alan Webb ó Kemp

## ANNEX 1: JOE ORTON




<[http://www.bbc.co.uk/leicester/content/articles/2007/02/14/joe\\_orton\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/leicester/content/articles/2007/02/14/joe_orton_feature.shtml)>

Accessed on 13 March, 2007.

**ANNEX 2: PROGRAM TO THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF  
*ENTERTAINING MR. SLOANE* IN 1964**





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## ENTERTAINING Mr. SLOANE

by

JOE ORTON

First Performance Wednesday, May 6th, 1964



WELL MADE · WELL PACKED

## ENTERTAINING Mr. SLOANE

By JOE ORTON

In order of appearance :

KATH .....	MADGE RYAN
SLOANE .....	DUDLEY SUTTON
KEMP .....	CHARLES LAMB
ED .....	PETER VAUGHAN

Directed by  
 PATRICK DROMGOOLE

Designed by  
 TIMOTHY O'BRIEN

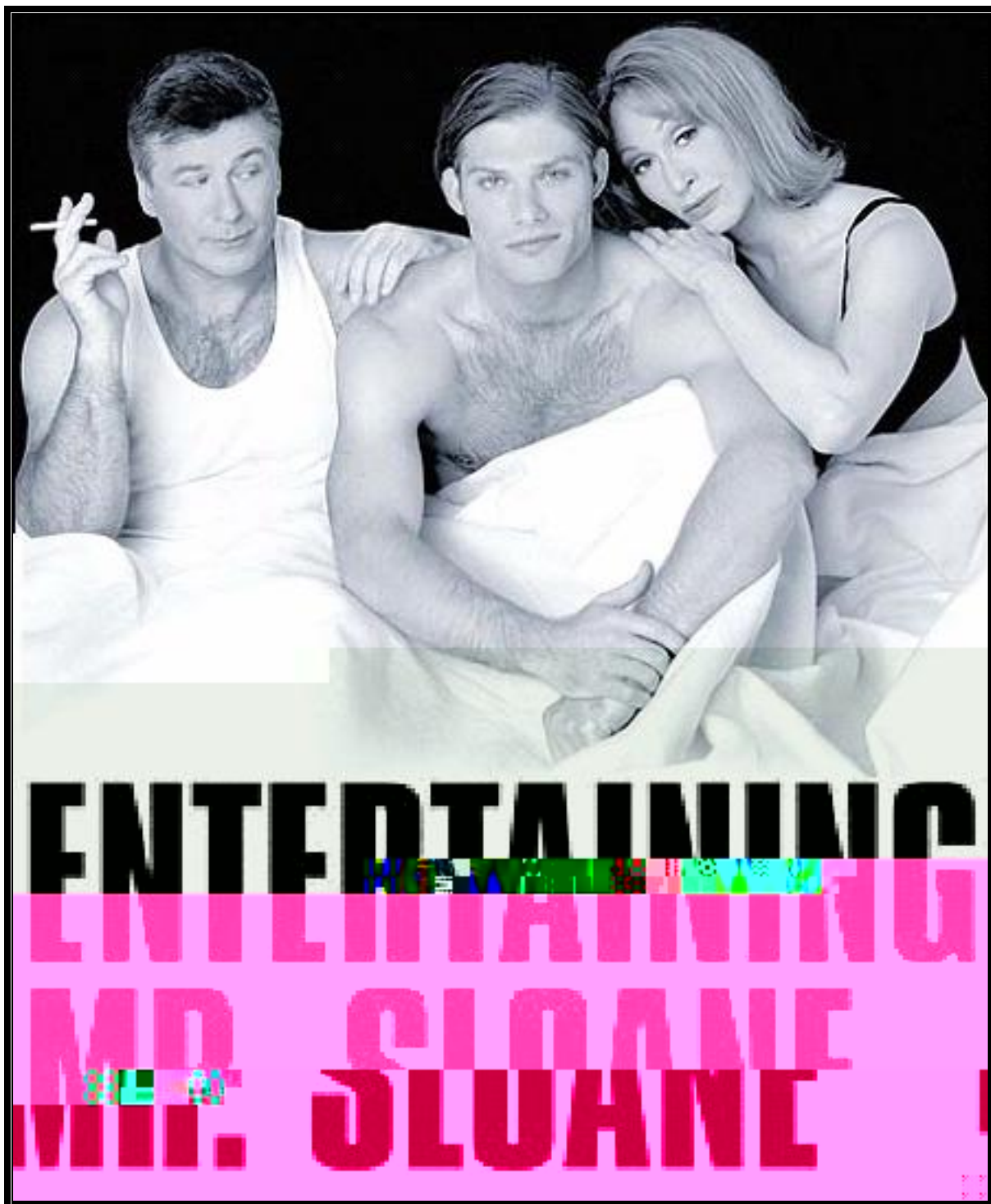
Costumes supervised by  
 TAZEENA FIRTH

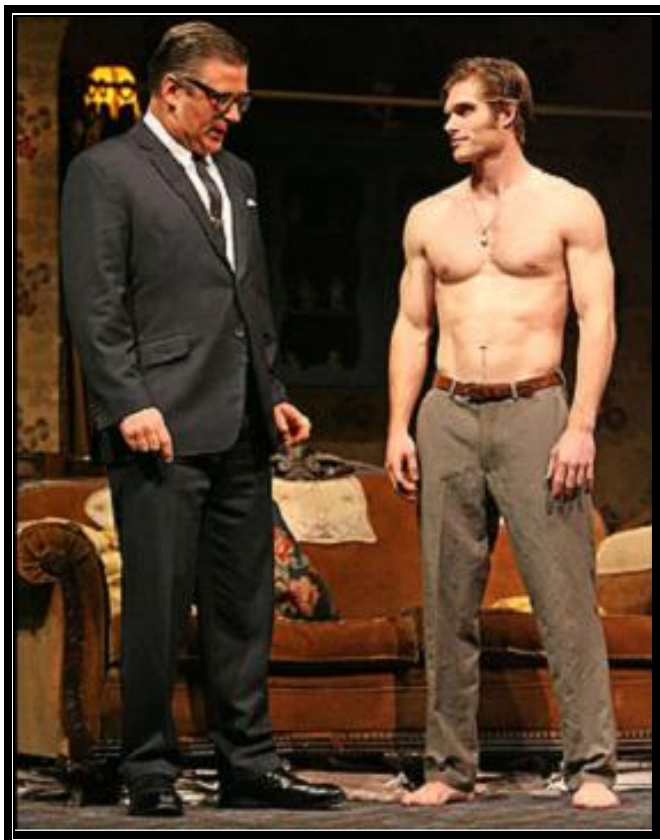
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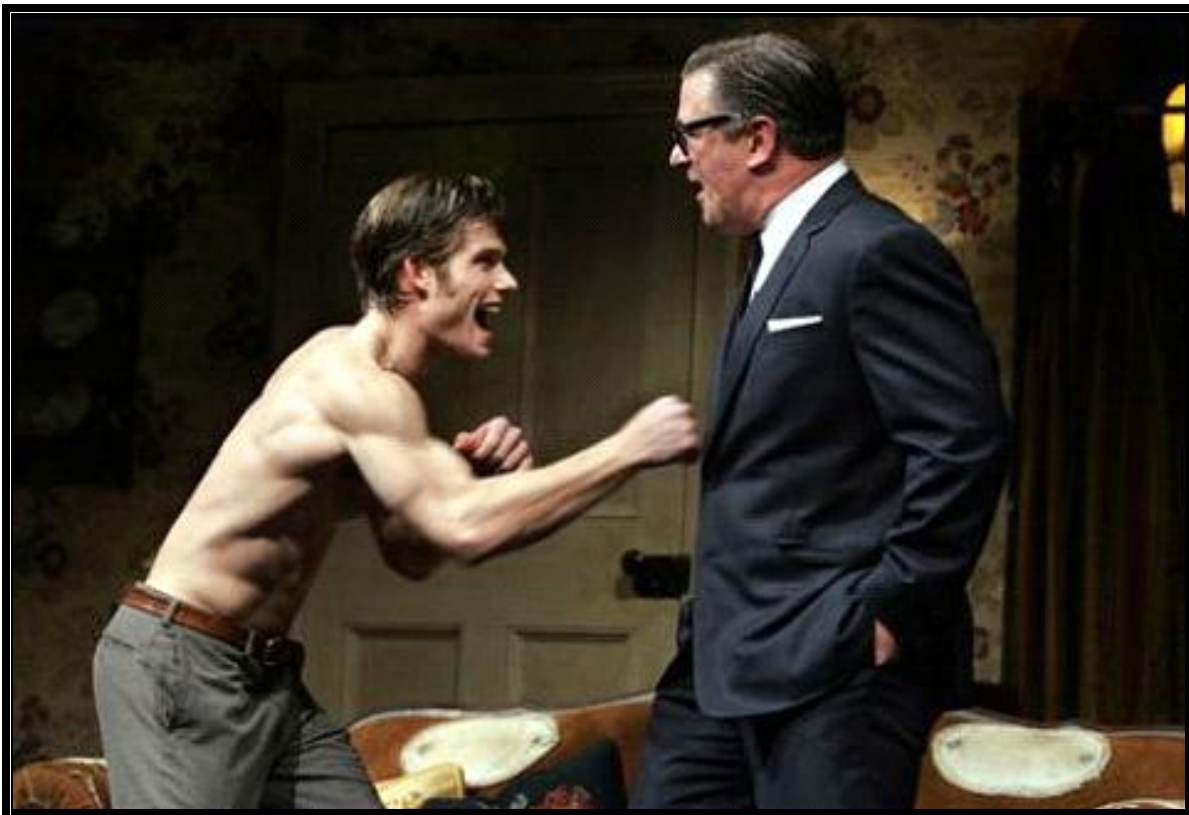
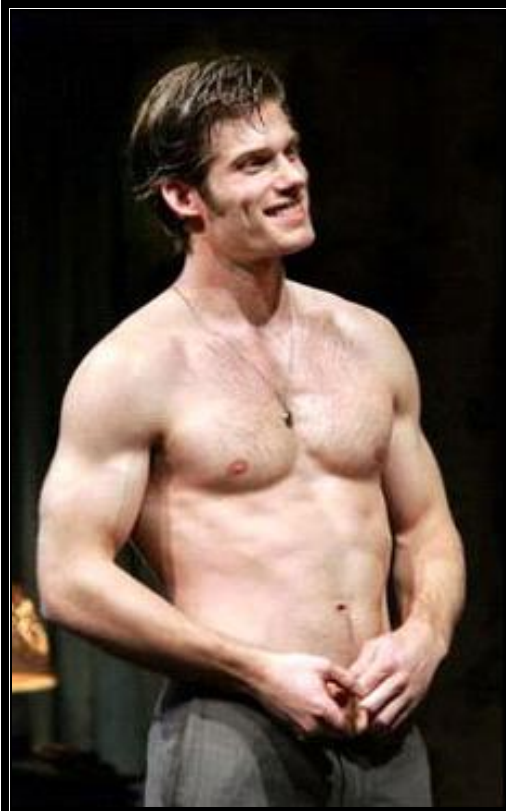
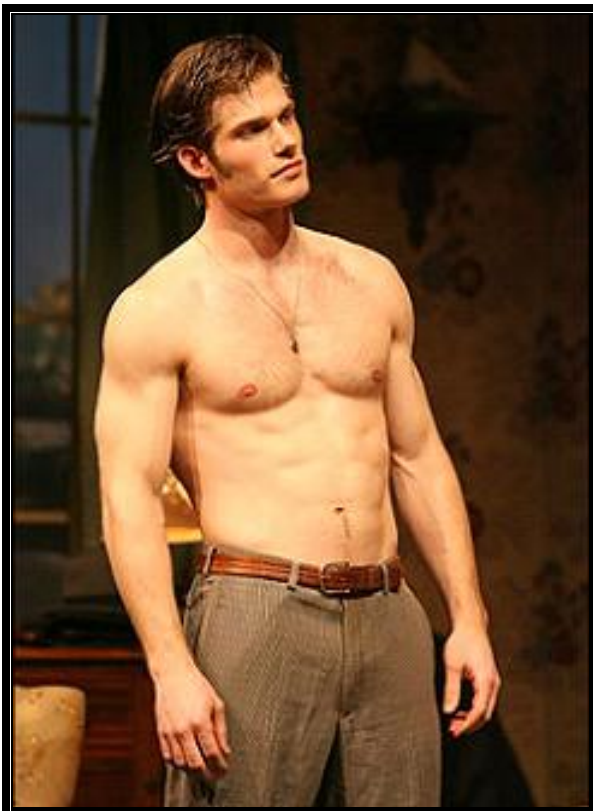
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ANNEX 3: THE OFF-BROADWAY REVIVAL







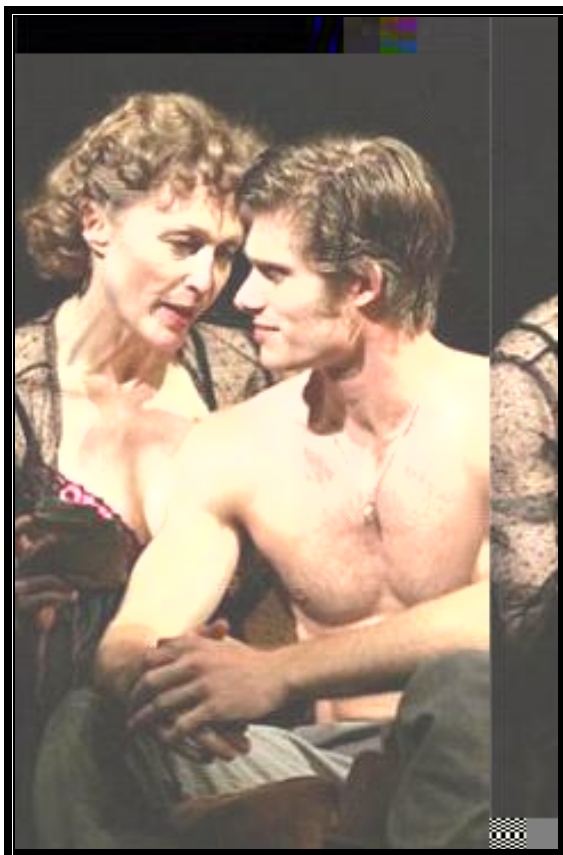






















**Roundabout Theatre Company's Off-Broadway revival of  
Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr. Sloane***

17 Feb. 2006, New York.

**ALEC BALDWIN ó ED**

**JAN MAXWELL ó KATH**

**CHRIS CARMACK ó SLOANE**

**RICHARD EASTON ó KEMP**

**SCOTT ELLIS ó DIRECTOR**

**PHOTOS BY ó SARA KRULWICH**

<http://theater2.nytimes.com/2006/03/17/theater/reviews/17sloa.html>

Accessed on 17 Feb, 2007.

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