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## A Patriot for Men: The Politics of Masculinity in John Osborne's "A Patriot for Me"

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A PATRIOT FOR MEN: THE POLITICS OF MASCULINITY  
IN JOHN OSBORNE'S *A PATRIOT FOR ME*

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Theatre and Performance Studies

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By

Joshua Kelly

May 2016

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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## ABSTRACT

### A PATRIOT FOR MEN: THE POLITICS OF MASCULINITY IN JOHN OSBORNE'S *A PATRIOT FOR ME*

By

Joshua Kelly

May 2016

By applying David Savran's scholarship on the politics of masculinity to John Osborne's play *A Patriot for Me* (1965), I demonstrate that Osborne exemplified contradictory sexual politics in the play, and was criticized as homophobic and praised as revolutionary in similarly contradictory original reviews. I argue that play very much typifies the heteronormative politics of masculinity by placing a dominant homosexual (Redl) as protagonist, and inverts the positions of the period woman and the staged effeminate man. Redl is historically represented as a heroic homosexual, but is actually a heteronormative object. I provide evidence for this interpretation by employing Savran to conduct a close reading of the play *A Patriot for Me*. I also provide in my Conclusion an analysis of a notebook in the Osborne archives, purported by biographer John Heilpern to be simply notes for *A Patriot for Me*, but which actually contain many private ruminations on Osborne's sexual politics that shed light on his thoughts concerning homosexuality.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I INTRODUCTION .....	1
II CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL RECEPTION.....	18
III READING FOR MASCULINE ETHOS.....	29
IV CONCLUSION.....	80
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	97

## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

It isn't any fun having no clear idea of the future, is it? And you can't re-make your past. And then when one of you writes a book about yourselves, you pretend it's something else, that it's about married people and not two men together. . . . That is not honest, Alfred.

-*A Patriot for Me*, pg. 114<sup>1</sup>

*A Patriot for Me* is arguably John Osborne's most ambitious play, chronicling twenty-three years of the true story of Alfred Redl, an officer in the Austrian Army in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and utilizing roughly seventy characters over three acts and twenty-three scenes in largely differentiated settings.<sup>2</sup> The play was produced in 1965 by the Royal Court Theatre where it ran for sixty-six performances. It was Osborne's fourth play with the English Stage Company, the company that produced *Look Back in Anger* (1956), *The Entertainer* (1960), and *Luther* (1961).

## SYNOPSIS

1890, Lemburg, Austria—Redl is an officer in the Austrian Army who purportedly lives extravagantly but with small debt due to continuous benefactions from family members. Intelligent, good-looking, dedicated, and a polyglot, Redl is the prime example of a successful officer treated with distinction. The play begins with a scene in which Redl and his colleague Siczynski anxiously anticipate a duel in a dark gym, for

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<sup>1</sup> All play quotes in this work will come from *A Patriot for Me*, the Faber & Faber edition, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> John Osborne, *A Patriot for Me* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966)

which Redl has unexpectedly volunteered to be Siczynski's second. Effete and aristocratic, Ludwig Max von Kupfer enters, duels Siczynski by sabre, and leaves him dying in the arms of Redl. After the incident is relatively swept under the table, Kupfer, Redl, and Maximilian von Taussig receive positions at the War College. While celebrating, Taussig attempts to "share" a woman with Redl in a bar which doubles as a brothel, and Redl declines, but does accept another young woman for a private tryst. Redl is unable to have sex with her, but they converse late into the night.

Years later, at the Emperor's ball, a promoted Redl has been mingling with his superiors and peers, and is introduced to the Countess Sophia Delaynoff, with whom he then has a turbulent and dramatic sexual and romantic relationship. The scene is spent fighting over Redl's behavior, his drinking, and his expenses. After they've broken off, Redl is seen in a café with Taussig discussing the past and their future assignments. After Taussig leaves, a young man in the café approaches Redl, implies that Redl is a homosexual cruising for younger men, and is nearly strangled by Redl in front of the other patrons.

Act I closes with Redl in lying in bed with a young private named Paul, wondering why he had waited so long. Paul opens the bedroom door to allow four of his comrades to enter and beat Redl senseless while he pockets Redl's expensive accessories and lets himself out. Act II is dominated by a fabulous drag ball hosted by the Baron von Epp, which Redl attends. Fully embracing of his homosexuality and in the subculture of homosexuals of the period, Redl however arrives not in drag but in splendid uniform, with a young man, Stefan, as his partner. The evening progresses wonderfully, full of



camp and ribald humor in glorious contrast to the austerity of the military ball in Act I, until von Kupfer appears and disturbs Redl's calm. Redl, in a fit of rage and insecurity, punches a young man dressed as Mozart's Susanna in the face, a person with whom he'd been very entertained all evening, and departs in the ensuing shock.

Until this point in the play, two Russian intelligence officers, Oblensky and Stanitsin, have been closely monitoring Redl. As a homosexual and a man with incredible debts (his claims that his money had been furnished by wealthy family was a lie), the Russians are able to blackmail Redl into reporting Austrian military secrets to them. They also offer to pay him handsomely. Redl accepts with some hesitation, but rationalizes in this scene and through the rest of the play that his loyalty should only be to *himself alone*, giving us the title of the work.

Leaping into the future again, Kupfer has become something of a right-hand man to Redl, and lives with him in his luxurious apartment. He announces the arrival of the Countess, who has come to inform Redl that she is to be married to Stefan, for whom Redl still harbors powerful feelings. Redl unleashes fury upon her, and demands that she leave, while the Countess espouses her views of the tragedy of closeted homosexuals—voicing the opinion of the author. The Countess serves as the *raisonneur* in more than this scene alone. In a surreal scene following this, Redl visits Mischa in a hospital, a young man who has very much lost his mind, and with whom Redl appears to have had an intimate history. He quickly departs after receiving an incoherent response from the invalid, but one which suggests Redl might find himself in the same place, someday.

In the final scenes of the play, Redl has taken a new lover named Viktor, whom it appears has not accepted the deference necessary for their relationship to function. Redl beats him, expounds on the generosity he has bestowed upon Viktor, prophesies his bleak future as a washed-up homosexual, and then suddenly recants, holding the sobbing Viktor on the floor and promising never to hurt him again. Finally, after an establishing scene confirming Taussig informed on Redl's treachery, Redl is approached by his superiors in his hotel room, offered a gun, and left to himself. Waiting on the streets, his superior officers eventually hear the gunshot marking Redl's suicide.

#### CRITICAL OVERVIEW

The play is structured around Osborne's most commonly used trope: that of the outsider. In the case of the protagonist, Redl is of a subaltern sexuality and a much maligned class: from the petty bourgeoisie. Since his historic rise to fame with *Look Back in Anger* in 1956, Osborne has written the misunderstood dissidents of Jimmy Porter, Archie Rice, Martin Luther, Bill Maitland, and George Dillon. Not only a playwright, Osborne also gained national notoriety for his work as a public intellectual, writing acerbic editorials for major newspapers and commenting on topics both political and theatrical. His most infamous work in this regard was Letter to My Fellow Countrymen, printed in the *Tribune* on August 18th, 1961, which excoriated the Establishment that had "defiled" his country, and professed he had "a knife in his heart" for Macmillan, Gaitskill, and others.<sup>3</sup> Politically, his work as a public intellectual has been characterized best not as *pro*-anything, but as "*anti*," an attitude that pervaded his plays and is

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<sup>3</sup> Osborne, John. "Letter to my Fellow Countrymen." *The Tribune*, August 18th, 1961.

represented in Alfred Redl.<sup>4</sup> This antipathy and ambivalence in relation to homosexuality is, in fact, a major staple of the play, despite the show being regarded as a “landmark play” on behalf of the homosexual revolution in British culture.<sup>5</sup> While Luc Gilleman positively described it as “daring,” many others, like those quoted in Chapter II, have confessed an uneasiness with the portrayal of this homosexual hero, questioning its honesty and denouncing its representation.<sup>6</sup>

So why do critics disagree on the political objective of the play? Why is there a discrepancy between the interpretations regarding *A Patriot for Me* as a play beneficial to homosexual politics and those that denounce its representation of homosexuality? What kind of “homosexual” did Osborne create that made him disagreeable to some critics, writers, and audience members? And was such a representation “daring” for its time but ultimately misrepresentative of a subaltern culture growing in social visibility? I chose to interpret *A Patriot for Me* through the politics of masculinity for the same reason Savran finds the subject so relevant today. He writes:

Because theatrical production is so deeply and intricately ideological, and because, during the postwar period, the Broadway theater was a genuinely popular art (at least for the middle classes), the works of Miller and Williams provide, I believe, an unusually graphic and emotionally charged field in which to explore the packaging and marketing of Cold War masculinity for an impassioned consumer culture.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us* (Vancouver: Vintage, 2007), 232-233.

<sup>5</sup> “It is a landmark play in its open treatment of homosexuality . . . few post-war plays have dealt so brilliantly with the way in which an individual, in rejecting the ethos of his society, also uncannily reflects it.” *The Guardian*. Cited on the cover of *John Osborne: Plays: Patriot For Me; Luther; Inadmissible Evidence* (London: Faber & Faber, 1998)

<sup>6</sup> Luc Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 146.

<sup>7</sup> David Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 6.

This is analogous with Osborne and England. By evaluating critical reception for the play and utilizing David Savran's description of the politics of masculinity in relation to the character of Redl and his story, I show that Osborne did not, in fact, write a stage homosexual, but rather a homosexual hom(m)o-sexual (a difficult label that I shall explicate in greater length), my elaboration of concept based on Savran's heterosexual masculine ethos. This is the schism that informs many critics' aversion to the representation of the homosexual and of Redl in particular. Savran's politics of masculinity, explained below, creates a model by which the ideal post-war male was measured in American (and British) society—of which the traits that concern us most are homophobia and hom(m)o-sexuality—and through analysis of the text I show that Redl is a strong example of this model. I also show that various other representative attitudes toward homosexuality in the play can be similarly framed in the masculine ethos, particularly “hom(m)o-sexuality,” a heterosexual behavior concerning the commodification of females, which is inverted in the two halves of *A Patriot for Me*.<sup>8</sup>

I show in the Conclusion that critical confusion surrounding the play and Osborne's attitude toward homosexuality comes not only from an inability to write a role outside of his own heterosexual paradigm, but because Osborne too struggled with his own homophobic masculine identity and latent homosexuality. The rest of this Chapter shall be dedicated to describing Savran's politics of masculinity and the two main elements which is used most heavily in this work, followed by a review of the critical and historical reception of the play in Chapter II, and an analysis of the play text in Chapter

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<sup>8</sup> By “inverted,” I mean that the commodification of females in the heteronormative paradigm becomes the commodification of effeminate males in the homonormative paradigm.

III. In my Conclusion, there is an examination of the notebook in which Osborne inscribed his thoughts for the play (retrieved from the Osborne Archive at the Harry Ransom Center) and a final statement of my thoughts on the masculine ethos explaining why such studies are relevant in today's theatrical and political landscape.

### THE POLITICS OF MASCULINITY

David Savran begins his exploration of the politics of masculinity with a strong anecdote worth repeating. He refers us to an article printed in *The New York Times* on July 25, 1959, which covers Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev in a restaurant discussing U.S.-Russian Cold War negotiation positions (including the treatment of women in capitalist society) about which neither could come to an agreement. Finally, Khrushchev, seeing a nubile, young waitress, proposes to Nixon, "Let's drink to the ladies." Nixon reassures him: "We can all drink to the ladies."<sup>9</sup>

Savran uses this story as a vivid portrayal of masculine politics in action in a post-war fashion:

What is most remarkable about this exchange is its disclosure of a point of strategic agreement that transcends the Cold War: the politics of masculinity . . . In this friendly toast, the antagonism between capitalism and communism is displaced and reconfigured as an opposition between man and woman, producer of discourse and silent accessory, ogling subject and object of the gaze. Rhetorically, Nixon's declaration . . . accomplishes far more than the Geneva Convention ever could, coupling the two Cold Warriors under the aegis of "all", of a "universal" desiring subject—belligerent, inflamed, masculine, and heterosexual—who, in his unspeakable arrogance, carves up the world and then threatens to annihilate it.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Reston, James. "A Debate of Politicians". *New York Times*, July 25, 1959. (Cited by Savran, 1)

<sup>10</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 4

Savran's basic concept of the post-war politics of masculinity can be summated by those four words—belligerent, inflamed, masculine, and heterosexual—but can also be described in contemporary masculine stereotypes: exceptional, conservative, chauvinist, and homophobic. Savran asserts the possibility that in the context of male-male interactions (and select male-female interactions), that list might also include tactics of violence. The two elements that will be most discussed in the following work will be those of homophobia and chauvinism (in the form of the commodification of females).

Naturally, these second descriptors are drawn from a post-hoc understanding of the behavior of 1950s masculinity, but Savran would agree with a contemporary reflection of post-war masculinity. The essential understanding of “masculinity” he derives from the “masquerade” definition of “womanliness” as posited by Joan Riviere in her famous 1929 essay—and, he elaborates, “although a construction central to the operation of all patriarchal cultures, it is, like ‘womanliness’, constantly subject to the vicissitudes of history.”<sup>11</sup> As for such a masculine ethos being heterocentric, he writes at great length of the depiction of women both in the home and onstage in a position of servitude, and reminds us that McCarthy's prey were, akin to Hitler's, increasingly homosexual.<sup>12</sup> He writes, “Perhaps most crucially, it has been consistently inscribed within a strictly heterosexual framework,” (he takes his inspiration from Judith Butler) and that:

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<sup>11</sup> Joan Riviere, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. Victor Burger, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (New York: Methuen, 1986), 65. (Cited by Savran, 1992, 15); Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 16

<sup>12</sup> My comparison, not Savran's.

Because of the publicity given to Hollywood's most celebrated former Communists, the fact is sometimes obscured that homosexuals were targeted by McCarthy with a level of violence and hatred that often surpassed even the baiting of the "Reds".<sup>13</sup>

Savran goes on to remind us that "the virtual exclusion of women [in both Old Left Communism and in Cold War liberalism] went hand in hand with the production of a vehemently masculinist and homophobic theory of literary production."<sup>14</sup> He further illustrates this point by quoting Michael Gold, a critic who spurned one of the characters of Thornton Wilder as "a typical American art 'pansy'":

Send us a giant who can shame our writers back to the task of civilizing America. Send a soldier who has studied history. Send a strong poet who loves the masses and their future . . . Send an artist. Send a scientist. Send a Bolshevik. Send a Man.<sup>15</sup>

Through Savran's work, it is clear that the politics of masculinity in the mid-part of the last century contains a distinctly homophobic and chauvinistic character.

Osborne, a dramatist serving as public intellectual in many respects, allows some of his most notorious thoughts to be published in periodicals to hedge on the subject of homosexuality. He condemned its politicization, in many cases.<sup>16</sup> For a playwright who clearly felt that the need for a homosexual protagonist was great enough to defy the Lord Chamberlain's censorship edict and risk serious financial loss both to himself and the

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 17

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Gold, "Wilder: Prophet of the Genteel Christ," *The American Left: Radical Political Thought in the Twentieth Century*, 192-195 (Cited by Savran, 25)

<sup>16</sup> Osborne goaded and attacked all politicized groups—from militant feminists and righteous banner-waving CND marchers, to well-meaning New Age vicars and the gay lib movement. (Ian McKellen was therefore described as "beaming his homosexuality from every lighthouse.") John Heilpern, *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man* (Vancouver: Vintage, 2008), 506.

Royal Court—a company of which he was a nearly a founding member—there are biographical and political questions to be asked concerning Osborne’s precise attitude regarding homosexuality. I will demonstrate that the response of his own post-war masculine ethos is strongly represented in *A Patriot for Me*.

Following homophobia, the second facet of the politics of masculinity we will engage in this work is chauvinism and sexism, as they relate to the commodification of women or hom(m)o-sexuality. Some reviews of *A Patriot for Me* have simply chalked up the treatment of women to Redl’s disinterest in them (this might be supported by one or two notes in his “A New Play: Themes of Homosexuality” notebook reviewed in my Conclusion).<sup>17</sup> Neither Redl’s apathy nor homosexuality, however, account for the general use of women as sexual objects or objects of derision in the play—an attitude which both the hypermasculine military culture of the 1890s Austrian Army and the subservient status of women in the Anglo-American mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century might explain. Furthermore, *A Patriot for Me* is a response to 1960s British debates about countercultural protagonists and draws a parallel between Viennese decadence and the British conservative Establishment (precisely in the same way Savran refers to *The Crucible* in his study of Miller’s representation of masculine politics, although the play’s setting reflects sexual attitudes centuries removed from the historical period he seeks to illustrate).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “Redl’s categorical unwillingness or inability to identify with women, and thus, according to the definition of the gaze in this play, to ‘see’ them is demonstrated on several occasions.” Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 250

<sup>18</sup> “To the objection that Judy’s career hadn’t properly got off the ground in the last years of the Austro-Hungarian empire, one could reply that the Schnitzlerian society depicted in the play is often early Sixties England in osprey feathers.” Taylor, Paul. “ARTS REVIEW: Theatre A Patriot for Me RSC, London.” *The Independent*, Thursday 19 October, 1995.; “Typically—but in a way no less typical for Shakespeare’s



Such sexual politics are illustrated in Osborne's work by the "hom(m)o-sexuality" at play in Acts II and III of *A Patriot for Me*. What Savran calls "the primary mode of desire" in Miller's work (illuminating the masculine ethos in *After the Fall* and others), he draws on Luce Irigaray to define as:

...the system of exchange under patriarchy that always refers to "the production of women, signs, and commodities...back to men." It is a social monopoly in which "wives, daughters, and sisters have value only in that they serve as the possibility of, and potential benefit in, relations among men."<sup>19</sup>

This is the integral point of *A Patriot for Me* as viewed through the lens of the masculine ethos and a fulcrum of this thesis: after Redl's acceptance of his homosexuality in the final scene of Act I, a transformation occurs between the heteronormative concept of hom(m)o-sexuality in Act I and the homonormative concept of the same in Acts II & III. In exchange for women, effeminate men are treated as signs and commodities, are objects to the ersatz heteronormative subject, and are the recipients of belligerence and violence from those characters (specifically Redl) who still embody heteronormative traits of the masculine ethos. In this way, the "well-meaning liberal" Osborne wrote a play that has been hailed as the foundation of homosexual revolution in 1960s Britain, but very much demonstrates a hetero-patriarchal structure in homosexual disguise.<sup>20</sup> This transformation will be made clearer in Chapter III, as will the position of

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history plays, for instance—all these plays [*A Patriot for Me*, *A Subject of Scandal and Concern*, *Luther*, *God Rot Tunbridge Wells*], although set in the past, really deal with the present and are in fact state of the nation plays." Gilman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 141.

<sup>19</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 35.

<sup>20</sup> John Clum, "A Culture That Isn't Just Sexual: Dramatizing Gay Male History". *Theatre Journal*, Volume 41. No 2, 181.

Redl as (despite being homosexual) a product of masculine politics who fits many criteria listed by Savran.

Ultimately, Savran's view of the politics of masculinity provides us with a framework to measure the post-war masculine ethos of which we will use two primary criteria (homophobia and hom(m)o-sexuality). Alfred Redl, despite being one of the most visible homosexual characters in the British theatre of the Sixties, heavily demonstrates these two post-war masculine criteria. This contradiction informs the criticism of theorists and critics alike who dismiss Redl as a disagreeable representation of the staged homosexual. This evaluation will be further informed by the discussion of critical reception in Chapter II, an analysis of the play text via the politics of masculinity in Chapter III, and an analysis of the notes of John Osborne for this play in my Conclusion.

Before examinations of the play and the notebook concerning Osborne's thoughts on the subject and for his play can begin, it will be beneficial to bridge the gap between Savran's study of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams and mine of Osborne—to draw the parallels between the masculine ethos of the post-war American and the post-war Briton. While there are some discrepancies (Savran refers to a time spanning roughly from the late '40s to the late '50s and my focus on Osborne is mid-'60s, and we are dealing with similar but separate cultures) the similarities not only between cultures but between subjects—particularly between Miller and Osborne—are numerous.

Osborne, like Miller and Williams, “left several autobiographical and quasi-autobiographical texts and [took] prominent stands in notable cultural struggles,” so his “discursive self-fashioning must be regarded as being as much a part of [his] work as

[his] plays and fiction.”<sup>21</sup> Like Miller and Williams, Osborne lived in a state wherein “the intensive level of surveillance posted over the circulation of sexuality” over its citizens “facilitated an unprecedented level of social control...”<sup>22</sup> Both Miller and Osborne occupied the position of dramatists as public intellectuals; Miller was an icon of “ambiguous” politics and shifted often in the views he categorized in essays and plays between the ‘50s and the ‘80s, precisely as Osborne did; both wrote plays depicting the liberal tragedy of a protagonist crushed beneath the burden of capitalism, whose contrarian philosophies were drowned out by the clamor of commodity and conservatism (Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* vs. Miller’s *A View From The Bridge*, perhaps).<sup>23 24</sup> Savran elaborates on this in a way in which “Miller” could easily be swapped with “Osborne”:

As Miller acknowledges, each of his plays pivots round a male protagonist, the “lead character”, who determines the play’s “central reality”. Its plot, meanwhile, “is carried forward by [that] one individual wrestling” with a moral quandary, and a sequence of scenes is rightly controlled to focus the action squarely on the protagonist’s anguished confrontation with his ever-intensifying “dilemma”.<sup>25</sup>

Is this not the very structure, encased in Osborne’s understanding of the well-made play, which gives us Jimmy Porter with his social and economic ennui, Archie Rice and his lost profession, Martin Luther and his lust, or Alfred Redl and his allegiance?

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 9

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> Miller “insisted that writing is a form of political practice and that a writer who is forbidden to take a political stand cannot function as an artist.” Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 20; Osborne: In a ringing declaration of faith in the poetic power of drama, Osborne declared that his enduring plays of private fires and public tragedy are “worth a thousand statements of a thousand politicians”. Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us*, 230.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 29

Both Miller and Osborne admired Henrik Ibsen and even translated one of his plays (Osborne *Hedda Gabler* and Miller *An Enemy of the People*), and both credit Ibsen with their typical forms, particularly by “crippling the liberator, and, simultaneously erasing the possibility of collective action . . . [guaranteeing] his hero’s—and society’s—tragedy.”<sup>26</sup> Both allied early on with a radical kind of Leftism (Miller’s Communism and Osborne’s “ban the bomb” socialism) that quieted to a kind of Cold War liberalism afterwards. Both dissolved the line between public and private and used their work to give acting opportunity to the women in their lives while depicting previous romantic allusions in those roles (Marilyn Monroe in *The Misfits*, reputedly in *After the Fall*, and Mary Ure’s Alison in *Look Back in Anger* modeled very much from Osborne’s first marriage with Pamela Lane). Both had meteoric rises to fame, faced excess scrutiny from the Establishments of their respective countries, both peaked in theatrical relevance comparatively early in their lives, and both had a period where their continued offering of playscripts were considered more on the basis of their names than on the potential those late writings had for greatness. It should go without saying that they were both white, male, heterosexual, produced theatrical work and political comment during the ‘40s and ‘50s of last century, took several famous lovers, were married multiple times, and were figures at the apex of the politics of masculinity. Finally, the work of both suggests, in the words of Savran:

Unless discourse is rigorously policed...it will unwittingly divulge all that the hegemonic masculinity of the domestic revival strives so desperately to conceal: its jealous and violent ownership of women and the past, the hom(m)o-sexuality of desire, and the Other always lurking

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 32

within, always threatening to slit open its name or trash its dream of Paradise.<sup>27</sup>

As for similarities with Williams, it should be said at the outset that John Osborne was emphatically heterosexual, and published evidence suggesting that he might have been homosexual primarily consists of a tell-all by Anthony Creighton (with whom Osborne shared a houseboat while writing *Look Back in Anger*) that has been categorically denied by everyone from Osborne's last wife, Helen Dawson, to his authorized biographer and renowned theatre scholar John Heilpern. Both playwrights being those invoking "theatres of resistance," the subject naturally appealed to their iconoclastic tastes—although Williams very much addressed it "obliquely" (in the word of Savran and Williams) in plays depicting private life while Osborne took it up in an oratory and public fashion. Both, as mentioned above vis-à-vis Miller, had incredible rises to—and precipitous falls from—fame. Both succumbed to an overly lavish alcoholism later in life. Both wrote their most famous plays with themes centered on the private life—an opposite focus of Miller—in emotionally poetic terms which was the basis of Osborne's admiration of the writing of Williams.<sup>28</sup> *Look Back in Anger*, in many ways, is a fusion between the domestic settings both of Miller and Williams that compliments Miller's themes of socio-politics with Williams's focus on private relations. Heilpern writes:

Only a few months after the premiere of *Look Back*, Osborne paid tribute in the *Observer* to the humanity of Tennessee Williams's plays. "Every serious British dramatist is indebted to them," he wrote, identifying with

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 75

<sup>28</sup> Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot For Us*, 123.

Williams—a depressive, like him, who was haunted by his own “blue devils”. . . . Besides, he would always empathize with the Southern dramatist who, when asked to give his definition of happiness, rolled his eyes and replied, “Insensitivity, I guess.”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the post-war culture of England emulated that of its American cousin with particular likeness to the institution of heterosexuality and the spurning of homosexual nature and individuals. The United States of the ‘40s and ‘50s was seeing an increased surge in homosexual subculture, the unrest of which culminated with Stonewall in 1969: the legal discriminations leading to that event were oppressive in the extreme.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the United Kingdom had more forcibly than ever repressed such expressions of sexuality with upholding of the woefully outdated Buggery Act of 1533. In both countries, it was illegal in many instances for a homosexual to enter various establishments, proclaim their orientation, or to engage in homosexual activities—in England, it was still an offense worthy of imprisonment until the Sexual Offenses Act of 1967. Like the United States, Great Britain had its own cherished structure of the nuclear family among the working classes, a culture that painted women as domestic and men as providers, whose masculinity was established both as a leader domestically and as a leader professionally (establishments that were shaken on both sides of the Atlantic by feminist movements). The stability of the nuclear family and the heterosexual reproduction that was a product of it was as necessary in Great Britain as the United States for the proliferation of a commodity-focused household. For the framework provided by Savran, then, whose politics of masculinity in culture are defined by Nixon’s

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 230.

<sup>30</sup> Dudley Cleniden, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 2013)

“universal” treatment of women birthed of a “capitalist attitude” vis-à-vis Elaine Tyler Mary’s “domestic version of containment,” the hom(m)o-sexuality of men towards women in that endeavor, and by an institutionalized and legislated homophobia, the United States and Great Britain of the ‘40s, ‘50s, and ‘60s were cousins, indeed.<sup>31</sup>

From these views through the masculine ethos lens, it will be apparent that *A Patriot for Me* is a play starring a homosexual character championing the heteronormative politics of masculinity. Despite the original production proving to be an artistic landmark in the struggle for homosexual rights in Britain, it is one that serves the masculine ethos by replacing women with effeminate men, and offers a dominant homosexual as a homophobic hom(m)o-sexual. This particular interpretation of the work will also be applied to some biographical questions about Osborne himself: the notebook containing his research for the play suggests an author who also struggles with a masculine identity and who may have been a Freudian latent homosexual. My Conclusion will demonstrate that Osborne, like Redl, exhibited traits of a contradictory sexual ethos and thus informs the character.

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<sup>31</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 6.

## CHAPTER II

## CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL RECEPTION

The staged representation of the homosexual in the 1960s was primarily one of minstrelsy and comic artifice. England of the '60s was slowly growing increasingly tolerant of homosexuality, it is true (the passing of the Theatre Act in 1968 would abolish the practice of censorship completely, and, as Wolfenden writes on page 143, “the repeal of the law against homosexuality was being actively discussed in the House of Lords even at the time of [*A Patriot for Me*]'s production”—arguably *because* of the play's production), and the theme was making more frequent appearances in television and theatrical media.

The Wolfenden Report (which we can infer from Osborne's notebook “A New Play: Themes of Homosexuality” was indeed studied in his preparation for *A Patriot for Me*) was “drawn up by leading figures from church, state, and medical science, [and] recommended decriminalization of homosexuality as early as 1957.”<sup>1</sup> But homosexuality never appeared on stage or television without irony, humor, and smoke-screens. *A Patriot for Me* was the first play of its kind to deal with the subject with utter sincerity, as Luc Gilleman writes:

Ostensibly, the reason for the Lord Chamberlain's action was that the play dealt explicitly with sexual situations of a kind that would remain criminal until the Sexual Offenses Act of 1967 . . . Quite a few plays and movies escaped censorship. Comedies especially could count on tolerance. This was the case with Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* (1964) . . . *The Killing of Sister George* (1965) . . . *Staircase* (1966) . . . Even some

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<sup>1</sup> Luc Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), 143



serious movies and plays with sexual content had been passed . . . *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* . . . *A Severed Head* . . . *The Homecoming*. None of these movies and plays, however, had shown, as *A Patriot for Me* did, two men in one bed or men dressed up as women at a drag ball—and all without the express aim of inviting sniggers.<sup>2</sup>

In this way, *A Patriot for Me* is a critique of a specific aspect of the attitude toward British homosexual culture. Given his public statements concerning homosexuality, there is a contradiction between a play that legitimates the rights and humanity of the homosexual and what many have perceived to be Osborne's views as entirely aligned with the masculine ethos. My explanation for this is that Osborne embodied the masculine ethos as described by David Savran, and his private friendships and correspondence (such as those with Tony Richardson and Anthony Page) betrayed a very counter-masculine attitude.<sup>3</sup> His play *A Patriot for Me*, however, is in some ways a liminal offering of this conflicted Osborne, in which both attitudes are displayed. It is possible that this liminality is what made the play effective for some of the 1960s British audience, by indulging just enough masculine ethos as to make the depiction of homosexuality palatable for a heterocentric culture otherwise likely adverse to seeing homosexuals sincerely portrayed. A portion of this might have been incidental to the playwright himself, as John Clum points out:

There is one crucial difference between these plays that is also central to my interests. As *Bent* and *As Time Goes By* were written for different

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Richardson, a notorious if closeted bisexual, was confused as well by the conflict of the lead character of the play, saying: "I mean, you'll have to *explain* it to me. What's it all *about*?" John Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us*. (Vancouver: Vintage, 2007), 305. Richardson's confusion supports the idea that Osborne not only did not write a relatable representation of a homosexual, but that the dominant conflict may have been one of heteronormative masculine politics rather than one of an otherwise homonormative plot.

audiences, presenting different political agendas and priorities (mainstream/assimilation, gay/resistance), so *A Patriot for Me* and *Another Country* are separated by the degree of identification with and point of view toward the homosexual subject matter. However daring Osborne's play was in 1965, and however important it was in opening up space for homosexual subject matter in the censored British theater, it presents its homosexual hero from the confused point of view of a well-meaning, but not totally convinced liberal. Its treatment of homosexuality is typical of what one might call mainstream drama.<sup>4</sup>

“Mainstream,” for our purposes, might translate to the kind of drama as written by a proliferator of the politics of masculinity (which was the norm), and understanding those politics as detailed by Savran provide clarity to that “confused point of view.”

The political attitudes towards homosexuality both in the United States and Great Britain were most powerfully displayed in censorship forces allowing only grossly stereotyped or minstrel versions of homosexuals on the stage. John Clum reminds us that “relationships could still be inferred from the behavior of the actors...best shown by a combination of selections from the catalogue of gay male stereotypes,” including

Effeminacy (mincing, limp wrists, lispings, flamboyant dress)  
 Sensitivity (moodiness, a devotion to his mother, tendency to show emotion in an unmanly way)  
 Artistic talent or sensibility  
 Misogyny  
 Pederasty (as we shall see, this became the stereotypical formula for homosexual relationships, with its connotations of arrested development and pernicious influence)  
 Foppishness  
 Isolation (the homosexual's fate, if he or she remained alive at the final curtain)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John Clum, “A Culture That Isn't Just Sexual: Dramatizing Gay Male History”. *Theatre Journal*, Volume 41. No 2, 181.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

With the exception of “Pederasty,” none of these behaviors are actively sexual. They are merely stereotyped by gender and unified by their distinctly unmanly quality. True to the real Otherness homophobia assigns to homosexuals, the primary indictment in a masculine ethos is that homosexuals simply don’t act like men, but instead like women.

From its opening at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square, London, in 1965, *A Patriot for Me* has been hailed as a paradigm-shift in the depiction of homosexuality on stage and the revolution for homosexual civil rights in England, and criticism concerning the play as a piece of art waffles from disdain to celebration.<sup>6</sup> However, its many detractors (generally theatre critics deriding its structure and writing and queer theorists who prefer valorized, heroic depictions of the homosexual subject) have understandably dissented from overwhelming support of the play under the impression that it even denounced homosexuality, or painted the homosexual in an otherwise unfavorable light.<sup>7</sup> These critics seem to see Redl as a homosexual, but an unsympathetic one and misrepresentative of the homosexual community.<sup>8</sup> Luc Gilleman writes:

Lord Annan during a debate at the House of Lords in 1968 said, “I cannot conceive of any play less sentimental towards homosexuality, more cold-eyed and ruthless in its exposure of the horror of life of a particular kind of homosexuality and less likely to induce anyone to get into this practice.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “Never before have such explicit details of the conversation and attitudes of homosexuals been seen on the English stage.” Shulman, Milton. “First Night,” rev. of *A Patriot for Me*. *Evening Standard*, 1 July 1965. (Cited by Gilleman, 145.)

<sup>7</sup> “It contains a denunciation of homosexuality more searing than anything I have seen or read elsewhere.” Hobson, Harold. “The Casting Out of Lieutenant Redl,” *The Sunday Times*. July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1965. (Cited in Gilleman, 145.); “This play can only be viewed as an utter condemnation of homosexuality.” Barker, Felix. “If Only Osborne’s Hero Deserved Our Sympathy.” *Evening News*, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1965. (Cited in Gilleman, 145.)

<sup>8</sup> “In view of public prejudice, I could have wished that the first play to raise the veil so completely could have had a hero more deserving of analysis and sympathy.” *Ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 145.

These observations differ slightly from my own, which is that Redl, while engaged in all activity homosexual, seems structurally based on a post-war masculine heterosexuals. It is one thing to mischaracterize a homosexual hero in an imperfect light during the pre-Stonewall apex of social change, it is another entirely to paint him as a heterosexual, hom(m)o-sexual male in disguise.

The charge of faux-heterosexual is not entirely based in theoretical merit. Maximilian Schnell, the Viennese World War II escapee who originated the role of Alfred Redl, maintained through his entire performance that Redl was in actuality straight and also refused to perform the bedroom scenes naked, insisting on keeping his “longjohns” on during the intimacy.<sup>10</sup> Christopher Plummer would only agree to play the role were he rewritten as straight.<sup>11</sup> A major approach to the original Redl, in this way, was colored by a heterosexual imprinting, an attempted wish-fulfillment of several artists to make him straight, although both Osborne and original director Anthony Page maintained Redl’s homosexuality, both dramaturgically and historically.

John Heilpern despairingly writes of Mary McCarty’s review of the original Broadway production in *The Observer*, wherein she says that the “chief merit of the play is to provide work to a number of homosexual actors, or normal actors who can pass as homosexual.”<sup>12</sup> Although disappointing to hear from the American critic who was the primary champion of *Look Back in Anger* in the States, her response was hardly unique.

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<sup>10</sup> Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us*, 311.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*; “Apparently, Plummer’s wife wanted the hero to be shown as a great lover of women whom the wicked Countess drove into the arms of men.” *Ibid*, 308.

<sup>12</sup> McCarthy, Mary. “Why did Osborne do this?” *Observer*, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1965. (Cited in Gilleman, 145)

Robert Gross writes in *Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in 'A Patriot for*

*Me'* that it is:

...a work of limited appeal, virtually no influence, and is generally viewed as an unsatisfying work of an important writer in decline. Rather than a founding text, it comes as a late manifestation of the tradition of bourgeois-tragedy...<sup>13</sup>

A lack of understanding of homosexual culture as McCarty's quote suggests was felt by the normal (i.e. heterosexual) audience, as depicted by W.A. Darlington in his opening night review of *A Patriot for Me* in the *Daily Telegraph*.

There was a certain amount of tee-heeing when the curtain rose on a stage-full of men dressed as women, but this died away. The scene ended in dead, and I think shamed, silence.<sup>14</sup>

Contentions over the representation of the homosexual become more outspoken as the decades move on and open discussion in defense of the homosexual hero is more common and lauded—thus, the direct attitude of the play toward homosexuality is more openly debated and the brilliance of the play itself less so. For the 1995 revival by the Royal Shakespeare Company under the direction of Peter Gill, Paul Taylor writes in *The Independent*:

No, this is a drama in which the hero is at odds with two societies: the straight, snobbish military world and the queeny demi-monde with which it overlaps, most egregiously in the famous drag ball. Osborne's temperamental sympathy for the hounded outsider is in sometimes fruitful, sometimes barren tension with *his touchy ambivalence about*

<sup>13</sup> Robert F. Gross, "Seduced by Meritocracy," *John Osborne: A Casebook*. Patricia D. Denison, editor. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 147.

<sup>14</sup> Darlington, W.A., rev. of *A Patriot for Me*, *Daily Telegraph*, 1 July 1965. (Cited by Gilleman, 145)

*homosexuality*. The reluctant, self-divided rebel is a figure with huge dramatic potential; there are, none the less, crucial moments (Redl's speedy, cliché-bolstering surrender to treachery; the fact that the focus is on the waiting officials rather than inside the hero's consciousness as he prepares for suicide) where you feel that this famously censor-afflicted play has itself censored out possible patches of complexity in its protagonist.<sup>15</sup> [emphasis, mine]

It comes as no surprise that Taylor recognizes an odd moral fence-sitting by the playwright, as Osborne somewhat confesses it himself, saying, “I had for years been wanting to write a play about homosexuality and the ambiguity of it.”<sup>16</sup> Heilpern reasserts that an overt homosexual commentary was not the point of the play, and that Osborne’s attitude toward homosexuality wasn’t terribly clear.<sup>17</sup> Osborne’s political attitudes concerning homosexuality indeed make him as well as Redl, something of a “reluctant, self-divided rebel.” It is my position that Osborne’s intention was never to create a realistic portrayal of the homosexual hero, but that the story of Redl was simply one exemplifying the “anti” mentality which Osborne fetishized so often, “an elegy for the persecuted.”<sup>18</sup> If this were indeed his intention, it would make sense that the masculine ethos which was second nature to the heterosexual playwright would become an influence in the plot, without an empathized subaltern identity to counter it. Furthermore, as analysis of the notebook “A New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality” in my Conclusion will suggest, Osborne’s framework for contemporary research and presentation of Redl was decidedly homophobic.

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Taylor. “Arts Review: Theatre A Patriot for Me RSC, London.” *The Independent*, Thursday 19 October, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> Alvarez, A. “Osborne and the Boys at the Ball”. *The New York Times*, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 1969. Section 2, 5.

<sup>17</sup> “Gay studies were the last thing ever on Osborne’s mind. It’s arguable that *Patriot* isn’t even about homosexuality as such.” Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us*, 307.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

However, by taking the narrative of Alfred Redl to illustrate the audacity of the independent mind, Osborne was naturally required to stage the closet homosexual life of the Hapsburg Viennese elite. Richard Findlater seems to take this interpretation, while joining those who think that the play is a representation of contemporary cultural attitudes towards homosexuality:

Up 'til now people [many] have believed, I suppose, that "A Patriot For Me" was of no more than ephemeral interest, because of the time expired novelty of Osborne's audacity (borrowing from history) in presenting the homosexual life both as a source of private joy, anguish, hate and fear and as an inescapable seam of establishment experience not only in Franz Josef's Vienna but also by implication in, say, London and Washington in the 1960s.<sup>19</sup>

Dan Sullivan, reporting on the American performance featuring Alan Bates but who had also seen the "flat" Broadway original in 1969, seems to think such considerations were out of Osborne's perception entirely. He summarizes:

Osborne himself, seems to want to dismiss [the characters] as a tainted and pompous lot, living under a code that would shrivel anybody's soul. At the same time, he doesn't come out and attack them -- which might have given the play some energy. Rather, he plays the objective Brechtian clinician, letting the data speak for itself. We read ahead, we agree that there is probably a connection between a work shop of the iron-man ethic and the world of the drag ball, and we wish that the speaker would conclude.<sup>20</sup>

Sullivan is undoubtedly correct that there is a "connection between the iron-man ethic and the world of the drag ball," or what one might call the masculine ethos and the homosexual other as characterized by post-war attitudes, though his acknowledgment of

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<sup>19</sup> Findlater, Richard. "Plays and Players". July, 1983. <http://alanbates.com/abarchive/stage/patriot.html>

<sup>20</sup> Sullivan, Dan. The Los Angeles Times. <http://alanbates.com/abarchive/stage/patriot.html>

this comparison only supports the idea that a strong connection (and indeed, inversion) may in fact exist. Gross hints at the possibility of such an inversion of heteronormative power when he describes the drag ball.

Osborne moves from one homosexual man being robbed and beaten by five assailants to a vast and opulent display of a male homosexual culture, including a baron, a judge, and higher-ups in the military. One moment Redl seemed isolated and outnumbered; now he seems a part of an insular crowd. It seemed before that his position might be in jeopardy due to his sexual orientation; now one wonders if there are any straight men in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>21</sup>

The critical engagements and interpretations of this particular play go on, and many of them will be quoted as necessary during the exploration of specific scenes of the work, but it can be readily summarized that these readers of Osborne, while they acknowledge an inversion of subjectivity in the play, never explain precisely why this happens, beyond the transition of Redl from a world of isolation to a world of inclusion—which itself is somewhat erroneous, as Redl is isolated by his latent homophobia throughout the course of his tenure as an openly gay lover. Furthermore, he is separated by his political allegiances. What is truly at work in this inversion is not the attitude of Redl as pre- and post-closeted homosexual, but the object of his sexual and social attitudes between the women of Act One and the effeminate men of Acts Two and Three. This is the precise opposite of what a homosexual historical drama is meant to “posit.”<sup>22</sup> (Although Redl makes emotional pleas defending his love toward the end of Act Three,

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<sup>21</sup> Robert F. Gross, “Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in *A Patriot for Me*,” *John Osborne: A Casebook*, ed. Patricia D. Denison. (Hamden: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997), 151.

<sup>22</sup> Gay historical drama “posits the right to love, not merely the right to sex, as the stake in the battle against oppression.” John Clum, *Still Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1992), 162.



the revolving doors of sexual partners and the retributive and callous nature with which he disposes of some of them exemplifies these men much more as objects of sex than of love.<sup>23</sup>) The case could be made that such men are treated in precisely the same way Jimmy Porter or Bill Maitland—or indeed John Osborne himself—might simply have treated women. This is an extrapolation with which Osborne scholar Arnold Hinchcliffe would agree, as he says:

Osborne, in his statements outside his play, seems not very sympathetic to homosexuals (he always calls them “poufs”), but then the same could be said about his comments on women and he married several of them.<sup>24</sup>

The facts concerning Osborne’s attitudes towards homosexuals and women are indeed conflicting and ambiguous, although it is true that he held several notorious homosexuals as close and dear friends for much of his life, and married five extraordinarily competent and independent women who were fully aware of his criticisms of the feminine identity politics and his portrayal of women in some plays (most egregiously in *Look Back in Anger*) when they fell in love with him.<sup>25</sup> Critical interpretations of his most offending characters frequently yield conclusions about conflicted, self-obsessed males lashing out at women for reasons of personal ennui as opposed to sexual politics.<sup>26</sup> It is the nature of the research for *A Patriot for Me*, as

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<sup>23</sup> “The viciousness of this homosexual *demi-monde*, the voraciousness of Redl’s sexual desire and the constant ruin of his emotional life are made to seem inherent aspects of homosexual existence, rather than behaviour that society and an institution outlawing homosexuals have helped to form.” Nicholas de Jongh, *Not In Front Of The Audience: Homosexuality On Stage* (Abingdon, Routledge, 1992), 113.

<sup>24</sup> Arnold P. Hinchcliffe, *John Osborne*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 82. (Cited by Gross, 153.)

<sup>25</sup> Osborne, John. *Daily Express*, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1959. (Cited by de Jongh, 108.)

<sup>26</sup> “It is true that Jimmy *doesn’t* develop—there he is, stuck with rage and frustration, seeking refuge in Alison and turning on her when he doesn’t find it...” Gavin Lambet, “Look Back in Anger: Review”, *Film Quarterly*, 1959. Vol. 12, No. 4, 39-41.

evidenced in my Conclusion, that suggests a homophobic influence in the source materials which leads Osborne to similarly homophobic conclusions about the nature of homosexuality.

An examination of the play text will be based in a demonstration of two post-war heterocentric natures in Act I which are metamorphosed in Acts II and III: a homophobia internalized by Redl and reinforced by society, and a hom(m)o-sexuality demonstrated by men in Act I but particularly by Redl, which is carried on in Acts II and III by Redl despite a radical paradigmatic change concerning heteronormativity. Through this lens, the contention and contradiction of these critics and others will be clarified and, in some cases, justified. Osborne didn't write the homosexual they wanted, but rather a homosexual as Osborne would have recognized and respected him: a patriot for men.

## CHAPTER III

## READING FOR MASCULINE ETHOS

The following analysis of the play *A Patriot for Me* focuses solely on those moments where the politics of masculinity (primarily those moments of homophobia and hom(m)o-sexuality) are best exemplified, explored, discussed, or portrayed. Of particular importance is the establishment of the masculine ethos in the play, the inversion of hom(m)o-sexuality as it relates to women in Act I and then effeminate men in Acts II and III, and the homosocial relationship.

## ACT I

## SCENE ONE

In the first scene of the play, Redl meets with the young soldier Siczynski to perform the role of second in his duel against von Kupfer. The duel is to take place in a military gymnasium at the end of the night—the manliest of all possible atmospheres, or, in the words of Gilleman, “the temple of masculine society.”<sup>1</sup> In discussing von Kupfer, Redl and Siczynski practically serve as narrators giving information to the audience to better define ideal masculinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Gilleman engages the duel as a metaphor for the combative, dualistic nature of nearly all scenes in *A Patriot for Me*. In considering Gilleman’s interpretation, I’ve determined the proverbial gymnasium as extrapolated to all scenes of the play, encapsulating the story within this “masculine temple.” Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 141-159.; “In a real sense, Redl never leaves the gymnasium in which the play opens. His world is defined by physicality, discipline, and violence. It is a place with virtually no space for women, yet it denies honest expressions of love between men. Redl is an almost schizoid figure in gymnasiumland.” John Clum, *Still Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2000), 171.

REDL: [von Kupfer] gave a champagne supper at Anna's.  
 SICZYNSKI: Who was invited?  
 REDL: Half the garrison, I imagine.  
 SICZYNSKI: Did you go?  
 REDL: I'm your second . . .  
 SICZYNSKI: Well then, he'll have stayed there till the last moment, I should think. Perhaps he'll have been worn down to nothing by one of those strapping Turkish whores.  
 REDL: I doubt it.  
 SICZYNSKI: His spine cracked in between those thighs. Snapped. . . . All the way up. No, you're most likely right. *You're* right.  
 REDL: He's popular: I suppose.  
 SICZYNSKI: Yes. Unlikeable, too.  
 REDL: Yes. He's a good, what's he, he's a good officer.  
 SICZYNSKI: He's a gentleman. And adjutant, adjutant mark you, of a field battery at the ripe old age of twenty-one. He's not half the soldier you are.<sup>2</sup>

By the second page of dialogue, Osborne has been sure to give us the criterion by which major pieces of the masculine ethos are measured: success (in this case, of the military variety), efficaciousness, and sexual appetite—parallel indeed to how such masculine fortitude might be described in England and America at the time of the play's writing. (Apropos Savran's application of the masculine ethos to Arthur Miller, these two characters might have been discussing the characteristics of Willy Loman's ideal sons in another play.) Those points of detestation for Kupfer's success have sometimes been drawn into critical explorations of the play, and rightly as themes on which Osborne typically comments: Kupfer's aristocratic standing is a subject of hatred for the young men, particularly for Redl, who thereby worked much harder to attain his status, for example. But as later events of the play show, even fiscal stability is an ascribed masculine necessity: to be aristocratic may be a sign of random fortune, but to have debts

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<sup>2</sup> John Osborne, *A Patriot for Me* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996), 14

is the mark of someone less than a man. Even despite Redl's—and Osborne's—simultaneous hatred and admiration for the upper class, that theme which he time and again uses to isolate his tragic heroes, Redl demonstrates envy for von Kupfer's position by both keeping him as a lover and almost benevolently in his house.<sup>3</sup>

The subject of Siczynski's duel with von Kupfer stems of course from personal insult: a slight which must be met with violence. But such an insult was perfectly crafted not to decry his class or his ability, but specifically his masculinity.

SICZYNSKI: ... You think it doesn't matter about Kupfer's insult, don't you? Well of course you're right. I don't think it would have mattered *what* he said. Oh, I quite enjoyed his jokes about calling me Rothschild. What *I* objected to, from him,—in the circumstances, was being called Fraülein Rothschild.<sup>4</sup>

For Siczynski, the status of Jew was open to humor, of good-natured ribbing, but the homosocial boundary was crossed at the implication of femininity or homosexuality. This is a bizarre prioritization, as in the years leading up to World War I, Jews were the primary target for discrimination and hatred in Austria and elsewhere—even among hidden minority groups (anti-Semitic humor is bandied about unironically among the oppressed subaltern group in the drag ball in Act II). Why should Siczynski take public offense to the effeminizing innuendo as opposed to the truly dangerous smear of being a

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<sup>3</sup> KUPFER: Why do you hate me, Alfred?

(Pause.)

Why, then?

REDL : I've said often enough no one, and not you, is to call me Alfred in public. . . . (*Hesitates.*)

KUPFER: Then why do you let me live with you?

REDL: You don't. I allow you a room in my apartment.

KUPFER: Exactly. You know, better than anyone, about jealousy.

*Ibid*, 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

member of the Jewish nation? Through my interpretation of the play, it is because the masculine ethos creates a hierarchical system of Otherness wherein men can be Jewish and be enemies, but to be gay is an abomination: men of Jewish descent can still drink to the ladies. What makes such offense particularly ironic is that—as later events of the play present—Kupfer himself is gay. The female sobriquet happily adopted by many gay men is a common trademark and a code of friendship.<sup>5</sup> Those feminine appellations given to men in the drag ball of Act II are not merely drawn from their costumes, but are part of a common coded parlance among homosexuals, so it's possible that Kupfer was attempting, in fact, to engage in a subaltern lingo with Siczynski—who, in his naïveté of homosexual language, didn't recognize the shibboleth.

The transgressive nature of their relationship is made paramount by their private discussion in this of all places. Redl has developed an attraction for Siczynski (very likely the reason he agreed to perform as his second), and intimates that fact for the audience's sake quietly after Siczynski asks if Redl has seen him with a sabre. "More times than I can think of," Redl responds *softly*.<sup>6</sup> Despite their being perfectly alone, Redl does not dare to openly confess his sexual interest in Siczynski and so desecrate this masculine temple. Redl tries harder to make this clandestine connection with Siczynski by stumbling over his own justifications for secrecy.

REDL: Look, Siczynski, why don't I, I'm quite plausible and not

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<sup>5</sup> The titles of "Baroness" and "Tsarina" in Act II are, naturally, the salutations prescribed in relation to the drag costumes worn by the one being addressed, but are used very off-handedly, rather like character names. Siczynski's Jewishness, then, might have allowed for a possible opportunity for Kupfer to hail him using such a code. A discussion in Act I, Scene Two gives cause to believe that Siczynski was, too, homosexual: Kupfer might have been addressing him in what William F. Buckley's critic in *The East Village Other* would have called "faggot dialectic".

<sup>6</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 16

half a bad actor, for one . . . reason and another, why don't you let me, sort of . . .<sup>7</sup>

These bungled attempts to establish the truth of his identity with Siczynski are the only such verbal attempts with anyone in Act I of the play.<sup>8</sup> The trauma of what comes next presumably disenchanting him from trying again. However, Osborne paints Redl by his nature as a solipsist who needs not look outside himself for gratification.

SICZYNSKI: . . . What, what does one, do you suppose, well, look for in anyone, anyone else, I mean.

REDL: For?

SICZYNSKI: Elsewhere.

REDL: I haven't tried. Or thought about it. At least . . .

SICZYNSKI: I mean: That isn't clearly, really, clearly, already in oneself?

REDL: Nothing, I expect.<sup>9</sup>

The idea that the homosexual is operating under a narcissistic form of love and sees in himself, romantically and sexually, all he needs for happiness is a psychological theory Osborne definitely considered, as he makes note of it in his "Notes for a New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality" (See: Conclusion).

Immediately after this, their third, Steinbauer, enters with the "cutlery." Siczynski pleads with Redl to tell him about a dream which Redl had the previous night, which Redl reluctantly does. In it, he is attending a court-martial of an unknown friend. After they jail him, Redl makes the decision to visit him in prison, at which he is arrested as well. It is impossible to know precisely the crime of which he might be guilty, but it's

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> I will illustrate the possibility that Redl attempts to do so more covertly with the waiter in Scene Four, and others.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

reasonable to think that his court-martialed friend was a lover, and that Redl's visiting him in the dream was the evidence needed to lock him away for the same crime.

Interpreted this way, the dream shows Redl's existential dread at his own identity, and illustrates the danger of not regarding that identity with suspicion and vigilance.

Thereupon enters Kupfer with his second and third. The stage directions are remarkably brief: they notate a quick, crisp duel in which Redl briefly tries to intervene, but is restrained by Kupfer. Kupfer deals a killing blow to Siczynski, and quickly dresses and exits. Steinbauer leaves to fetch a doctor, leaving Redl alone with the now-dead Siczynski. A further clue of Redl's affections: "REDL *wipes the blood from SICZYNSKI's mouth, cradling him in his arms. He is clearly dead.*"<sup>10</sup> The casual aloofness of their previous conversation no longer makes sense: the reverent cradling of a dead body of a man barely known by the protagonist is a bizarre action, unless Redl's feelings for Siczynski run much deeper. His brief dialogue concerning Siczynski in Scene Two and his outburst at Kupfer's presence in Act II present further clues to support this conclusion.<sup>11</sup>

## SCENE TWO

In this scene, Redl enters the office of his commanding officer (an environment almost as masculine as that of the gymnasium), von Möhl. Möhl immediately begins by

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> "For Redl, this instinctive loyalty to a man he hardly knows is an uncharacteristic, excessive gesture that, as we will see later, warrants closer attention." Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 149.



scrutinizing Redl, assuring him that his status is constantly noticed in the army, in which “only the very best kind of men can be entrusted.”<sup>12</sup> He goes on:

MÖHL: ... The real good ‘uns don’t ever really get left out, that’s why so much nonsense is talked, especially about the Army. You can’t *afford* to ignore a good man. He’s too valuable. A good soldier always knows another one. That’s what comradeship is. It’s not an empty thing, not an empty thing at all. It’s knowing the *value* of other men. And cherishing it.<sup>13</sup>

Much as in Act I, Scene One, the value and definition of real men are painstakingly spelled out for the audience by Osborne. Möhl elaborates even more grandly that his essential notion of comradeship is not only masculine, but military-masculine, by elevating it above race and trade in Scene Six.<sup>14</sup> As Redl meets these definitions, he finds himself accepted to the War College. Those specifications, including his excellent transcripts from earlier schooling, include:

MÖHL: ... Punctilious knowledge military and international matters. Seems to know Franco-Prussian campaign better than anyone who actually took part. Learned. All the qualities of first-class field officer and an unmistakable flair for intelligence. No. Wait a minute, there’s more yet. Upright, discreet, frank and open, painstaking, marked ability to anticipate, as well as initiate instructions, without being reckless, keen judgment, cool under pressure...friendly but unassertive, dignified and strikes everyone as a type of gentlemen and a distinguished officer...<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Osborne, John, *A Patriot for Me* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 23.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> MÖHL: ...it’s like being a Pole or a Slovak or a Jew, I suppose. All these things have more meaning than, say, a civil servant or a watchmaker. And all these things are brought together in the army like nowhere else. It’s the same experience as friendship or loving a woman, speaking the same tongue, that is a *proper* bond, it’s *human*, you can see it and experience it, more than ‘all men are brothers’ or some such nonsense. *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

While these accolades sound as though they are merely qualifications for an elite position at the War College, this description evokes Savran's labeling of Miller's "fantasy romantic[izing] the so-called self-made man so prized by American liberalism."<sup>16</sup> Redl, without the aristocratic advantage of von Kupfer, got precisely where he is from hard work and dedication. Scene Two serves as the leaping off point for Redl's foray into the world of heteronormative power, which is to be juxtaposed in Acts II and III. The intrigue of masculine politics deepens when Möhl asks Redl whether or not Siczynski was interested in women.

MÖHL: What about women?

REDL: Siczynski?

(*Nod from MÖHL*)

As I say, I didn't know him well.

MÖHL: But?

REDL: I never thought of him, no one seemed to, as a ladies' man.

MÖHL: Precisely. Yet he was very attractive, physically, wouldn't you say?

REDL: That's a hard question for another man to answer—

MÖHL: Oh, come, Redl, you know what women are attracted—

REDL: Yes. Of course, I should say he was, quite certainly.

MÖHL: But you never heard of any particular girl or girls?

REDL: No. But then, we weren't exactly, and I don't—<sup>17</sup>

Redl here, despite knowing or thinking about Siczynski more than he lets on, waits for the homosocial permission of Möhl before he can comment on Siczynski's attractiveness—and even then, can only do so by framing it within the possible perception of women. Möhl intends to find out whether or not Siczynski with the "manly disposition" was himself homosexual, as he accrued "quite hefty" debts, yet never

<sup>16</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 34.

<sup>17</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 27.

seemed to be involved with the company of women.<sup>18</sup> The company of women is (and in later scenes) roughly equated with the personal economy of the men providing for them—which is conversely demonstrated as the cost of keeping bum-boys and young lovers in homosexual relationships later. Möhl finishes the scene by congratulating Redl and advising him not to be married, as it will interfere with his schooling. He implies, however, that Redl may still enjoy women frivolously, as he says: “As for women, I think you know what you are doing.”<sup>19</sup> This is the first of many ways in Act I in which hom(m)o-sexuality is displayed: women are an idea on which men have capitalized.

### SCENE THREE

Scene Three takes place in Anna’s, a bar and brothel. Redl begins a conversation with his waiter (who notices the particular effete elegance of Redl’s cigarette case, which will be significant later). Looking over the crowd, Redl remarks:

REDL: Why do they have to make such a damned show? Howling and vomiting and whoring.

*(They listen.)*

Drunk. . . . Why do they need to get so drunk?

WAITER: End of summer manoeuvres they tell me, sir. Always the same then.

REDL: This place’ll get out of bound one day. Someone should warn Anna.

WAITER: I think she just does her best to please the young officers, sir. Giving them what they ask for.

REDL: They’ll get it too, and no mistake.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

While Redl is undoubtedly critical of the stereotypically manly behavior of the young officers, there is a sense of envy communicated in this scene. Redl dines alone in a private cubicle, in almost a sulky manner, although he is the one with something truly to celebrate. “I’m getting bored sitting here on my own,” he later says.<sup>21</sup> As if to compensate and engage in the dialectic of one of the boys, Redl says to his waiter:

REDL: What’s that young officer’s name?

WAITER: Which one, sir? Oh, with the red-haired girl, Hilde—yes, Lieutenant Steinbauer, sir.

REDL: So it is.

WAITER: Very beautiful girl, sir.

REDL: Yes.

WAITER: Very popular, that one.

REDL: Garbage often is.

WAITER: That’s true too, of course, sir.<sup>22</sup>

Redl’s disdainful choice of words is particularly enigmatic, as Hilde is precisely the girl with which he chooses to go to a private room later in the scene. Taussig, fellow entrant to the War College, comes to the table and announces that he has “fixed them up” with two ladies of Anna’s to take upstairs. While the notion of the commodification of women is nothing novel in a scene set in a brothel, it is the language of gift economy that Taussig and Redl employ that is revealing of the nature of post-war masculinity in the script.

REDL: Taussig, I can’t allow it.

TAUSSIG: Nonsense, it’s done.

(WAITER *pours champagne*. TAUSSIG *drinks*.)

You insisted on buying me dinner and champagne. And now, *more* champagne. Now, *I* insist on treating you. Your

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

health.

(*He glances quickly at the WAITER.*)

To black Zoe and her gipsy mole. And Hilde and her red whatever special she's got in there. Drink up.<sup>23</sup>

The hom(m)o-sexuality of this scene, the nature of the exchange of women, will be echoed in various ways in relation to effeminate men in Acts II and III. This is precisely the system Savran employs in his discussion of the masculine ethos when he says that “women function as conduits, esteemed only insofar as they articulate male homosocial relations.”<sup>24</sup> For Savran, the “notion of hom(m)o-sexual exchange provides an indispensable guide to the dynamics of male desire in Miller’s work.”<sup>25</sup> So, too, as this and following scenes show, does it in *A Patriot for Me*.

The scene continues as Taussig observes approvingly that Redl has taken up cigar smoking again, as he never could “stand the smell of those peppermints.”<sup>26</sup> He too, remarks then on the classy case of Redl’s, who maintains it was bought by a rich uncle. This quick but complicated exchange reveals the repressed effeminate characteristics of Redl, which are rather echoes of the mincing homosexual stereotypes detailed by Clum in Chapter II. So long as Redl has explanations for the extravagance of the case (and the source of the money that bought it), and the cigar smoking balances out the peppermints, he wins the homosocial approval of Taussig.<sup>27</sup> After what might be considered a light

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 36.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>26</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 33.

<sup>27</sup> “Redl might be said to send out delicate signals in the hope that the right kind of person will see him. His habit of sucking on peppermints, the carefully selected and tastefully displayed expensive smoking paraphernalia, such as the cigar cases, are acceptable touches of delicacy in the military world so long as they are accompanied by manly behavior and the smell of horse and leather.” Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 154. The idea that Redl is sending out “delicate signals” is unlikely, as when a man

interrogation in this style, Redl is eager to change his position back to one of masculine aptitude.

TAUSSIG: Perhaps I should have let you pay for Hilde yourself.

REDL: Of course. Please.

TAUSSIG: Unless you *would* have preferred Zoe. Sharing, I mean.

REDL: Hilde sounds like just the thing.

TAUSSIG: I think she's more your type. Bit on the skinny side. No bottom, tiny little bottom, not a real roly-poly. And breasts made like our friend here. Go on, go and get that other bottle!<sup>28</sup>

Here, we see a glimpse of what is to become the homosexual hom(m)o-sexuality later in the play. Taussig, although satisfied with Redl's explanation of his cigar case and his switch back to smoking, still somehow jabs at the idea that Redl is not completely endowed with masculine aesthetic taste. The idea that a rounder woman is preferable, the feminine shape contrasted to the thin, square masculine form, is the subject of several homophobic outbursts of Redl later in the play, when he suggests that homosexuals can be identified in public by their round bottoms. Taussig seems to be hinting to Redl, either in seriousness or in jest, that Redl might prefer Hilde because she is built less like a woman. Or he could be making the joke that Redl is simply not man enough to handle all of the woman that Zoe is, ergo sharing her might be more comfortable for Redl. More importantly, he rebounds this hyper-masculine observation onto their male waiter, who is still standing there—leveling the insult both at the flatness of Hilde's breasts and accusing the waiter of having them as well. A feminine trait is ascribed to a non-officer,

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seems to see Redl for what he is in Scene Nine, Redl responds with violence. I submit that these effeminate talismans are less purposefully revealed than items Redl rationalizes having for his love of them.

<sup>28</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 33.

subservient waiter, who is no more a man in the eyes of Taussig than Hilde. This is perhaps similar to Kupfer's calling Siczynski "Fraülein."

A strange interlude then follows after Taussig goes upstairs, admonishing Redl not to be too long. Redl has a halting exchange with the waiter which feels very much like an apology, or perhaps an understanding not expressed.

*(He goes to his wallet, trying not to be awkward. He hands a note to the WAITER.)*

WAITER: Thank you, sir.

*(He lights a match for REDL, who looks up. Then notices his cigar is out.)*

REDL: Oh, yes.

WAITER: Shall I take this bottle up then, sir?

REDL: Yes, wait a minute.

*(WAITER pauses.)*

Pour me another glass.

*(He does so. Picks up bucket.)*

WAITER: Good night, sir.

REDL: Good night.

*(The WAITER goes out. REDL stares into his glass, then drains it, fastens his tunic smartly and steps through the curtain into the tumult.)<sup>29</sup>*

The final lines of this scene clearly show a hesitation of the part of Redl, who uses the waiter to stall. Whether this is because he is steeling himself to go upstairs to make love to Hilde, ruminating on the previous events, or attempting to make a connection with the waiter is difficult to say, though stopping the waiter from leaving the moment Taussig rebukes him and giving him money as a consolation seems to point to the latter.

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

## SCENE FOUR

Scene Four opens with Redl and Hilde in a bed together.<sup>30</sup> Redl has not been able to sleep, but has been gnashing his teeth the few times he has dozed off. Hilde wakes and voices her concern for his teeth which she admires, intimating that “some men’s mouths are disgusting.”<sup>31</sup> She grabs some warm champagne and toasts Redl’s departure for Vienna. Redl asks her if she will be a prostitute there, if she ever goes. She supposes so. Then begins a highly enigmatic exchange.

HILDE: [...] Do you know, your eyes are like mine?

REDL: Are they?

HILDE: I’ve never seen a man faint before.

REDL: You should be in the army. Do you want to get married?

HILDE: (*softly*). Yes. Of course. Why? Are you proposing?

REDL: I’ve seen what you’ve got to offer.

HILDE: Only just. I’m sorry.

REDL: What about?

HILDE: You don’t like me.

REDL: What *are* you on about?<sup>32</sup>

Presumably, Redl fainted before he and Hilde were able to have sex. Hilde unknowingly has delivered a series of insults to Redl’s masculinity by comparing his eyes to her (presumably feminine) own and questioned his constitution by bringing up his fainting. Redl’s contemptuous response that he has seen everything she has to offer a potential husband is rebuked by Hilde’s “Only just,” an insinuation that sex was

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<sup>30</sup> In his notes, the Lord Chamberlain insisted that the characters could not be played in bed together before the show could be performed for the public. Dominic Shellard & Steve Nicolson & Miriam Handley, *The Lord Chamberlain Regrets: A History of British Theatre Censorship*. (London: The British Library, 2004), 164.

<sup>31</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 35.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 36.



attempted but unsuccessful, for which she immediately apologizes. When Redl presses her for her meaning, she changes the subject.

Further on, when Redl kisses her, she exclaims “Peppermints!” This is a further reminder of his femininity and arouses anger in him.<sup>33</sup> She rushes to placate him:

HILDE: *And* cigars. That’s what you smell of, and horses and saddles.  
 What could be nicer, and more manly?  
 REDL: You’re very, very pretty, Hilde. I love your red hair.  
 HILDE: You don’t have to make love to me, Alfred. I’m only a whore.  
 REDL: But I mean it.  
 HILDE: Hired by your friend.  
 REDL: Pretty little, brittle bones.<sup>34</sup>

In this interaction, it seems as though both characters are attempting to reassure one another of their respective sexual roles. This kind of support is weakened for Redl, later in the scene, when he hears the very loud sex of the waiter, Albrecht, next door, and Taussig in the room next to his. Redl’s distraction on hearing Albrecht, and giving into his temptation to look through the flap to see the sex occurring next door, further support the previous scene’s hints that Redl harbors an attraction to him. He reflects as he turns away from witnessing Albrecht mid-coitus: “One always wishes that a congenial evening had been—even more congenial.”<sup>35</sup> For him, a sense of impotence has pervaded the evening: the powerlessness to recognize himself, to exert agency over his own sexuality, or to conduct himself in heterosexual sex with Hilde.<sup>36</sup> Hilde, falling asleep at the end of the scene, tries again to reassure Redl of his masculine identity by telling him he has “the

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> The note in “Notes for a New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality” that reads: “I AM CONCERNED FOR MY VIRILITY” may have been reference to—or inspiration for—this scene. It is, as mentioned earlier, impossible to tell whether Osborne was speaking in first person or through a potential character.

most beautiful mouth that ever, ever kissed me,” and that he’ll “be a colonel one day. On the General Staff. Or even a general.” In any case, his own sense of masculinity is deeply shaken by the events of Scene Four.

Furthermore, a strain of the homophobia that permeates the play is demonstrated in Redl’s sentiment that “Love’s hardly ever possible.”<sup>37</sup> While not an incriminating line by itself, examination of Osborne’s notes for the play suggest that his understanding of homosexual love is that it is inspired from traumas or conditional situations and is not comparable to the love of “normal men.”<sup>38</sup> Redl may be expressing the viewpoint of the author that homosexual love is an impossible kind of love, or may be recognizing that fact in himself. More on this will be discussed in my Conclusion.

## SCENE FIVE

In terms of the masculine ethos, there is only one moment to be discussed in this scene. Russian officers Stanitsin and Oblensky review their files on Austrian officers in an attempt to discover which one has weaknesses to be exploited. On hearing that Redl does not carry on sustained relationships with women, Oblensky says:

OBLENSKY: [...] What he needs now, at this exact stage, is a good, advantageous marriage. An heiress is the ideal. But a rich widow would do even better. He probably needs someone specially adroit socially, a good listener, sympathetic, a woman other men are pleased to call a friend and mean it. Experienced. He knows what he wants, I dare say. He just needs someone to unobtrusively provide the right elements...<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 37.

<sup>38</sup> Osborne, John. Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 42.

On both sides of the political and warring divide, then, women are the tools of military men. Both Oblensky and Redl need the same woman to work for them simultaneously for individual ends. Oblensky, in a later scene in Act III, even casually remarks to Redl how easy it would have been to use this woman (Countess Delaynoff) sexually as it was politically.<sup>40</sup> The bonds of hom(m)o-sexuality and the masculine ethos in this play, much as in Savran's anecdote between Nixon and Khrushchev, transcend national and political boundaries.

#### SCENE SIX

This scene at the Emperor's ball serves this thesis in one primary way: as a contrast to the drag ball of Act II, and the parallels of class and the carnivalesque of straight society that occurs there. Those precise distinctions will be drawn in the analysis of that scene. More to our purposes, this scene demonstrates that Redl has been publicly expressing his masculine aptitude by having been promoted to Captain, dancing with several beautiful young women and, with all his social obligations, does not remember the Countess Delyanoff, though they have met three times previously. Some talk of the brotherhood of military service and the elite masculine calling it entails occurs:

DELYANOFF: I'm afraid I simply can't understand the army, or why any man is in it.

HÖTZENDORF: Nor should you. The army's like nothing else. It goes beyond religion. It serves everyone and everyone serves it, even Hungarians and Jews. It conscripts, but it calls the best men out, men who'd never otherwise have been called on.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Now, the Countess, you know, Delyanoff, you use to write those strained love letters to, I could have had her at any time, naturally." *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

Delyanoff, while she goes on to contest what she feels is the nature of the army and therefore seems a character of independence, serves merely as a sounding board so the male officers can express their views in monologue form. The closest thing to a female with agency in the play, the Countess in Scene Six is a character who only gives the masculine ethos opportunity to be heard. Her goading allows Redl to express a counter-hegemonic view of his own, however, when he says:

REDL: I don't agree that all men are brothers, like Colonel Möhl. We are clearly not. Nor should we be, or ever want to be.

COUNTESS: Spoken like a true aristocrat.

REDL: Which, as you must know, I am not—

COUNTESS: Oh, but I believe you are. Don't you, Colonel?

REDL: We're meant to clash. And often and violently. I am proud to be despised by some men, no perhaps most men. Others are to be tolerated or ignored. And if they do the same for me, I am gratified, or, at least, relieved.<sup>42</sup>

The crux of Redl's liberal tragedy, the need to belong without the wish to do so, particularly when it is contrary to his true nature, is demonstrated in this passage.<sup>43</sup> As we know, attacking formalized social orthodoxy was Osborne's modus operandi in this and many of his other works, and pitting Redl against the society in which he works to become successful makes him a true Osborne protagonist. Is this sentiment, that all men are not brothers, a counter-masculine idea? Perhaps so, but embodying it is central for Redl to represent an outsider as Osborne intended him to do. Redl's homophobia and his hom(m)o-sexuality still provide plenty of the masculine ethos to explore, even if he

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>43</sup> It is possible from the use of "liberal tragedy" to read that this thesis will use a cultural materialist framework and draw on Raymond Williams to interpret the play. While this was a consideration, the primary work of this thesis will be in the sexual politics of the play and its author, and will consider issues of class only in that Osborne believed homosexuality was a classless society.

rejects a common brotherhood of men as an idea, both of which are expressed in the following lines:

MOHL: Why do you think he married her?  
 COUNTESS: Why does any man get married?  
 REDL: Children, property.<sup>44</sup>

Redl once again demonstrates that he is a character incapable of understanding marriage to be anything other than an economic arrangement. Drawing from the “A New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality” notebook, it will be argued that Osborne’s research suggests a homosexual is simply unable to understand heterosexual love. The homophobic influence of the research gathered for this play is exposed in these lines.<sup>45</sup> And, again, Redl demonstrates that he sees women as conduits for homosocial relations and the exchange of capital.

#### SCENE SEVEN

The Countess and Redl are now in a relationship. Redl awakes in the middle of the night—his cries suggest he has been having nightmares. He urgently attempts to dress so that he can go out, despite the soft protestations of the Countess. The nightmares have caused him to cry, which is now a reoccurring affliction. It is not, however, the nightmares that frustrate Redl, but that he weeps about them.

COUNTESS: Why did you wake?

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<sup>44</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 53.

<sup>45</sup> “The play functions as a critique of a homosexual in a heterosexual world, and to sabotage the idea that homosexual love endures. Osborne is imbued with all the negative myths about homosexuals, imbued with the tales he must have been told in childhood of homosexual treachery, narcissism, bitchiness and cruelty, of the homosexual’s inability to make lasting commitment to anything much, of his habitual stresses and strains.” de Jongh *Not In Front Of The Audience: Homosexuality On Stage*, 112.

REDL: Oh: Usual.  
 COUNTESS: And you're crying again  
 REDL: I know . . . (*He face is stony. His voice firm.*) Why do you always  
 have to look at me?  
 COUNTESS: Because I love you.  
 REDL: You'd look away . . .  
 COUNTESS: That's why. What can I do, my darling?  
 REDL: Nothing. . . . I must get these damned things . . . (*Struggles with  
 his boots.*). I've love another brandy.  
 (*She rises and gets it.*)  
 It's like a disease.  
 COUNTESS: What is?  
 REDL: Oh, all this incessant, *silly* weeping. It only happens, it creeps up  
 on me, when I'm asleep. No one else has ever noticed it. . . . Why  
 do you have to wake up?  
 COUNTESS: Here. Alfred: don't turn away from me.  
 REDL: My mouth tastes sour.  
 COUNTESS: I didn't mean that. Anyway, what if it is? Don't turn your  
 head away.  
 (*She grasps his head and kisses him. He submits for a moment,  
 then thrusts her away.*)  
 REDL: Please!<sup>46</sup>

The shame Redl feels at weeping is a rejection of a feminine reaction. This fear for his own masculinity is further compounded by the implication that, like with Hilde, Redl has trouble accomplishing sex with her. While they've managed it, Redl requires special precautions.

COUNTESS: Why do you always have to make love to me with the—  
 REDL: There you go!  
 COUNTESS: Why? Why do you insist? Before we even begin?  
 REDL: I might ask you why *you* insist on turning the light on.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that Redl is wrestling with his homosexuality, as is the fact that his attempts to continue a heteronormative life are failing, and the stress of such a life is

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<sup>46</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 56.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

becoming more difficult to bear. Assuming he is in full knowledge of his desire for men and that it is becoming more difficult to repress, his language describing his position is increasingly self-hating:

REDL: Sophia: it's *me*. It's like a disease.<sup>48</sup>

COUNTESS: You'll always be alone.

REDL: Good. Splendid.

COUNTESS: No it isn't. You know it isn't. That's why you're so frightened. You'll fall alone.

REDL: So does everyone. Even if they don't know it.

COUNTESS: You can't be *saved* alone.

REDL: I don't expected to be saved, as you put it. Not by you.

COUNTESS: Or any other woman?

REDL: Or anyone at all.<sup>49</sup>

REDL: *I* am the guilty one. Not you. Please forgive me.<sup>50</sup>

In this way, the character has framed homosexuality as an affliction, a sin that cannot be purged. The self-hating facet of Redl's character, as was shown in Chapter II, was a primary point of contention for critics who scrutinized Redl's representation of the staged homosexual. Furthermore, due to the publicity of the Lord Chamberlain's censorship of the play, audiences were denied the mystery of Redl's crisis before they bought tickets and understood that this language was specifically referencing his own homosexuality, before the reveal of the fact in Scene Ten.<sup>51</sup> This means that Redl's

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>51</sup> "When *A Patriot for Me* was finally produced in club on 30 June 1965, the problems with the Lord Chamberlain gave it a false but commercially beneficial notoriety, but the scandal about the play's theme of homosexuality determined people's expectations. What did it have to say for or against homosexuality? That was the question everyone asked." Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 145.

language describing his homosexuality before his indulgence of it is necessary to consider when ascertaining the character's homophobic attitudes.

Once again, Delyanoff's motivations and objectives—her love of and fear for Redl—are preternaturally upstaged by the melodrama of Redl's struggle. Her character in this scene very much feels as though it is merely a catalyst for Redl's conflict, rather than the fully-fleshed characters of the men of the play: her role is a device.<sup>52</sup> It is a meta-theatrical note, but a necessary observation that the women of this play serve the dramatic structure much as their characters do within the plot: to facilitate the desires and intrigues of the men, usually by being overcome. As Savran writes of *Death of a Salesman*:

Throughout the play, women are associated with a chaotic and disruptive natural realm that must be subjugated and rigorously controlled so that it cannot undermine the three cardinal masculine characteristics: achievement, responsibility, and authority.<sup>53</sup>

In this scene, Delyanoff perhaps does not represent a threat to these three cardinal masculine characteristics, and the conflict is completely centered on Redl's struggle with himself. But once the exposition of Redl's combat with his own sexuality is over at the end of Act I, the only other scene in the play in which the Countess is a figure becomes very much a struggle for those masculine characteristics. (See: Act III, Scene One.)

## SCENE NINE

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<sup>52</sup> “The Countess, like Hilde the prostitute, only exists as a marker for the heterosexuality of the male characters; since Redl is a homosexual, they can only have negative significance, as people to whom Redl is *not* attracted.” Gross, “Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in *A Patriot for Me*”. *John Osborne: A Casebook* ed. Patricia D. Denison, 148.

<sup>53</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 36.



Redl meets Taussig in a café wherein Taussig immediately explains that he is meeting a chorus girl in ten minutes, and offers for Redl to come along, for she has a girlfriend. When Redl declines, Taussig refers to him as “snobbish,” evoking the mentality that men who are not consistently game for sexual escapades are prudish.<sup>54</sup> Redl, mirroring his deftness at playing masculine, turns the conversation away from his male shortcomings and to his own strengths: the return of his rich smoking paraphernalia, his fiscal security, and the casual way in which women can be disposed and forgotten.

TAUSSIG: . . . Can I have one of your cigarettes? I say, the old case back, eh?

REDL: And the watch. Everything in fact.

TAUSSIG: Good for you. Make a killing?

REDL: I tipped my mare against Steinbauer’s new gelding. Want a loan?

TAUSSIG: No thanks. The Countess isn’t bothering you, is she?

REDL: I told you—no. We never got on. She was prickly and we were always awkward together. It was like talking to my sister. Who died, last week, incidentally, consumption, and I can’t say I thought about it more than ten minutes.<sup>55</sup>

Redl’s attitude toward the death of some males, as it has been shown in Scene One and will be shown again later, is of a distinctly more reverent nature (at least, those he regards as more than commodity). This “categorical unwillingness or inability to identify with women,” in the words of Gilleman, is precisely what allows him to commodify them along with straight men.<sup>56</sup> It will be this same unwillingness to identify with effeminate males in Acts II and III that will inform the same hom(m)o-sexuality.

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<sup>54</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 65.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

<sup>56</sup> Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 250

The climax of this scene, and Act I, occurs when Taussig leaves and a young man comes up to Redl and asks him for his paper. Redl, annoyed, attempts to send him away. When the young man insinuates that Redl is there to find a male lover, Redl reacts with extreme violence.

*(The YOUNG MAN grins at him, and leans across to him, saying softly.)*

YOUNG MAN: I know what you're looking for.

*(REDL looks stricken. The YOUNG MAN walks away. He is almost out of sight when REDL runs after him.)*

REDL: You!

*(REDL grabs him with ferocious power by the neck.)*

What do you mean?

YOUNG MAN: Nothing! Let me go!

REDL: You pig, you little upstart pig. What did you mean?

YOUNG MAN: *(yells)*. Let me go!

*(Heads turn. REDL's anger subsides into embarrassment.)*<sup>57</sup>

Redl, in this moment, is back in the gymnasium: the boy had assaulted his masculinity in the same way “Fraülein” had Siczynski’s, and the “characterization of the violence of a normative, heterosexual masculinity toward its cultural Other,” in the words of Savran, is the response.<sup>58</sup> At this moment, Redl’s attitude toward his homosexuality is self-hating, is homophobic, and his reaction to being accused of picking up men may be merely an attempt at the “violence of a normative, heterosexual masculinity,” but a sincere one. Osborne has written a character who is not simply afraid of his own sexuality, but is contemptuous of it, precisely as the post-war male is of his homosexual Other. Redl is not merely saving face at this point in the script, but exercising the defining traits of his sexual paradigm. It is this conviction which makes the transition

<sup>57</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 67.

<sup>58</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 77.

between Scenes Nine and Ten so unexpected. At what point in the blackout between scenes—where in the narrative context of the plot—does Redl give up this paradigm and allow himself the homosexual action? Why is the shift so sudden and why does it occur out of view of the audience? Analysis of the final scene of Act I gives us some answers.

#### SCENE TEN

Redl smokes a cigar in a bed with a lover. When the lover gets out of the bed and Redl turns the light on, we see “the handsome form of a young PRIVATE SOLDIER,” rather than the female we might have expected him to be in bed with at this point of the play. Redl asks him, “Why wouldn’t you keep the light on?”<sup>59</sup> The parallels to Scenes Seven and Four now immediately place Redl in the position that the women were earlier in the Act, in the minds of the audience. His authority has been undermined and he serves as the submissive role of the scene. As he almost desperately inquires why Paul is leaving, Osborne deliberately uses him to echo the Countess.

REDL: [...] You mean it’s me?

PAUL: No. You look all right.

REDL: What is it, then? What are you dressing for?

PAUL: Got to get back to the barracks, haven’t I?

REDL: What’s your unit?

PAUL: That’d be telling, wouldn’t it?

REDL: Oh, come on, I can find out.

PAUL: Yes. General Staff and all that, isn’t it?

REDL: Paul. What is it? What have I done? What are you opening the door for?<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 68

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

The transformation becomes complete when Paul opens the door and allows four fellow soldiers to beat Redl senseless while Paul “pockets REDL’s gold cigarette case, cigar case, watch and chain, gold crucifix, notes and change,” and, finally, looking “down into his bloody face,” Paul tells Redl: “Don’t be too upset, love. You’ll get used to it.”<sup>61</sup>

In the words of Robert F. Gross:

Although scenes 3 – 9 do little to reinforce the homophobia dramatized in the first two scenes, it returns with increased ferocity in scene 10 . . . There, Redl’s first homosexual encounter (with Paul, a young soldier) immediately leads to him being beaten and robbed. . . . Osborne thus depicts a homosexual lifestyle as a life of inevitable victimization.<sup>62</sup>

It is for this depiction that the transition between Redl’s fierce, conscious assertion of his own masculine ethos and the sudden giving into his homosexual desires between Scenes Nine and Ten is so abrupt: to increase the sudden shock of the inversion. Or, in the words of John Clum: “Allowing the erotic dimension of one’s feelings for men to emerge is moving from a world of brutal repression and power to one of brutal victimization.”<sup>63</sup> The sudden exchange of power was a transference of Savran’s three cardinal masculine characteristics from Redl to Paul, placing Redl effectively as a female subject, despite being a homosexual male. The belligerence, violence, and commodification of Redl effectively demonstrate Paul and his friends’ exercise of the masculine ethos. It is this exchange of masculine politics, and not the “movement from

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Gross, “Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in *A Patriot for Me*” *John Osborne: A Casebook* ed. Patricia D. Denison, 150.

<sup>63</sup> Clum, *Still Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama*, 171.

self-delusion to self-acceptance” which is commonly used as an explanation for the drastic shift in Redl’s character, that is the conflict for Redl and the audience.<sup>64</sup>

This inversion of power informs Redl’s actions for Acts II and III of *A Patriot for Me*, far more than his acceptance of his homosexuality. His attainment and exertion of the masculine ethos through Act I merely finds different subjects after the first intermission, a lesson he presumably learns from being such a subject in Act I, Scene Ten. As the previous analysis has demonstrated, Redl’s representation of the post-war masculine ethos in terms of his homophobia and hom(m)o-sexuality, have been well established. For the remainder of the play, he will now turn his homophobia from himself to others, and replace the commodification of the female with effeminate men. Demonstrating these post-war, masculine, heteronormative influences in interpretation of Acts II and III will fully inform those criticisms of the original production that labelled Redl as a poor representation of the staged homosexual.

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

The glamour and *demi-monde* nature of the drag ball which opens Act II and its obvious, stark contrast to the Emperor’s ball in Act I gives the audience opportunity to consider the shift between hetero- and homonormative worlds as the defining

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<sup>64</sup> Gross, “Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in *A Patriot for Me*” *John Osborne: A Casebook*. Patricia D. Denison, editor, 150.

transformation in Redl's character.<sup>65</sup> However this simple contrast between hetero- and homosexual becomes ancillary to the radical hierarchy of masculine politics that is present in the drag ball through my interpretation, and it extends through the rest of the play.

To begin with, the "aristocracy, diplomatic corps, officers of the Royal and Imperial Army, Flunkeys, etc." of Act I, Scene Six are replaced by the classes of drag that are worn by the guests in Act II, Scene One.<sup>66</sup> While aristocratic and meritocratic "class" still exists in the drag ball, it is also parodied and carnivalized. What becomes the true distinction of power is divided between those who are there to commodify the bodies of other men and those who are there to be commodified. As Osborne writes in his stage directions:

NOTE: At any drag ball as stylish and private as this one the guests can be seen to belong to entirely different and very distinct categories.

1. The paid bum boys whose annual occasion it is—they wait for it from one year to the next and spend between 3 and 6 months preparing an elaborate and possibly bizarre costume. This is the market place where in all probability they will manage to acquire a meal ticket for months ahead. They tend to either tremendously careful, totally feminine clothes—or the ultimate in revelation—e.g. Lady Godiva, except that he/she might think, instead of a gold lame jockstrap, that a gold chastity belt with a large and obvious gold key on a chain round her/his neck, be better.<sup>67</sup>

In this note, Osborne has already supplied the language of exchange by placing

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<sup>65</sup> "Osborne's ball scene is the plays centre, its validation, the image from which all else takes perspective and completeness. It is funny, compassionate, grotesque, humane and defiant." Bryden, Ronald. *New Statesman*, 9 July, 1965. (Cited by de Jongh, 116.)

<sup>66</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 44.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

that most feminine clique of drag guests as items of the “market place”. These feminized men, too, replace the “Flunkies” of Act I, Scene Six, and it is the costumed “Shepherdesses” that serve the champagne to the invited and privileged guests. Language involved in some of the descriptions contains homophobic markers.<sup>68</sup> The stage direction and accompanying notes announcing the drag ball has garnered particular interest among many critics of Osborne because of its length (three-and-a-half pages in the edition used for this thesis), but also because of the specific detail of the costumes, status of homosexual groups, and attention to feeling prescribed by Osborne in them. His intimate knowledge not only of the dress but of the spirit of drag led some like James Fenton to “wonder just a little where he acquired all this information, and the answer cannot be from reading books about the Hapsburg Empire.”<sup>69</sup> The implication, obviously, is that Osborne must have frequented drag balls himself or conducted an otherwise covert homosexual lifestyle in order to be able to fully express the nuance and theatre of the scene. Osborne’s authorized, biographer John Heilpern maintains Osborne’s distance from such events by responding:

He got it from [Christopher] Isherwood and [George] Devine on holiday in the south of France in 1961, from the demi-monde of homosexual friends like Anthony Creighton (who performed in early drag reviews), and from ex-lover Jocelyn Rickards, the costume designer, who gave him all the details of the different categories based on her experience of drag at the annual Chelsea Balls.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> “Osborne particularises the guests at the drag ball in terms that betray his own seething revulsion and disgust. The male prostitutes are ‘paid bum-boys’. There are ‘rich, discreet queens’, ‘grotesques’, and ‘whores’.” de Jongh, *Not In Front Of The Audience: Homosexuality On Stage*, 116.

<sup>69</sup> Fenton, James. “A Patriot’s Last Refuge”, *The Sunday Times*, 1983. (Cited by Heilpern, 304.)

<sup>70</sup> Heilpern, *John Osborne: A Patriot for Us*, 304.

The biographical intrigue of Osborne's stage direction notwithstanding, the playwright has clearly created an atmosphere of power by replacing the heteronormative hierarchy of the Emperor's ball with the homonormative hierarchy of the drag ball—an atmosphere in which Redl is once again an outsider, but still exerts agency through his masculinity. Apart from the strata of “bum boys,” “the discreet drag queens,” “the more self-conscious rich queens,” the separate category of “rich, discreet queens” who “balk at dressing up,” and the men who “put on drag in order to traduce [women] and make them appear as odious ... as possible,” are:

6. Finally, the ones who don't even make that effort but wear, like Redl, full-dress uniform and decorations—or evening dress.<sup>71</sup>

Redl, who is “quite cool, looking extremely dashing in his Colonel's uniform and decorations and close-cropped hair,”<sup>72</sup> is isolated from this new world in an inverse manner from his isolation of the old. Whereas in Act I his struggles with his sexuality separated him from the heteronormative world, his exterior embrace of the masculine ethos separates him from this new, homonormative one. Furthermore, Redl's promotion, an exterior badge of his rising rank in the masculine world of the military, is on display as much for the audience as for the guests at the ball. As will be significant in later discussion, Redl's date and lover Stefan Kovacs is dressed in similar masculine attire.

The manner of Redl and Stefan's dress is a subject of disdain for the ball's benefactor, Baron von Epp, who says:

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<sup>71</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 73-74.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 72.



BARON: [...] Why are you both dressed in mufti? You know my rule.

REDL: I wouldn't call the dress uniform of the Royal Imperial Army exactly mufti.<sup>73</sup>

Redl's defense of his clothing and his invocation of the status of the military are the opening shot in a scene where his exterior masculine identity is constantly under fire, even though his hom(m)o-sexuality is well-received. It is, however, Redl's expressed heteronormativity that gives him identity in the scene, in that while feminine epithets are used for virtually everyone in the room, Redl's continued pronoun is "him" and "Colonel." While it may seem that homosexual drag designations such as "her" are merely in recognition of the costumes the men are wearing, the feminine pronoun is also applied to men in male costumes, such as Major Advocate Kunz, who is dressed as Lord Nelson, yet is still referred to by the Baron as "she."<sup>74</sup> These sobriquets are similar to contemporary gay coded language, like the common use of "Mary."<sup>75</sup> Within the first two pages of dialogue of the Act, it is established that the first and foremost understanding of Redl's character is that he is a man above all else.

Redl's masculinity and domination is assured, particularly in relation to effeminate men, when the Baron jokes with the young man dressed as a "ravishing Tsarina" that Redl is an expert in capturing Russian spies, and he will devise an excellent punishment for the Tsarina if she turns out to be one.<sup>76</sup> When the Tsarina giggles,

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>74</sup> BARON: [...] "Kunz is my legal insurance. *Very* influential, that one! She'll deal with anything that ever came up..." *Ibid*, 75.

<sup>75</sup> LADY GODIVA: Two monks. Walking in the street. One's saying his rosary to himself. The other passes by as he's saying 'Hail Mary'. And the other stops and says: 'Hullo, Ursula'.  
*Ibid*, 85.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 72.

intrigued, the Baron says: “Eh, Alfred? What do you do to naughty little spies?” To which Redl responds:

REDL: (*bends down and grasps the TSARINA’s ear lobe*). I tie them over the back of my mare, Kristina, on a leading rein, and beat them with my crop at a slow canter.<sup>77</sup>

Redl’s assertion of dominance and the sado-masochistic images it evokes reinforce his masculine prowess, which is of course received enthusiastically by the Tsarina, who is so excited that her earring falls out. The suggestion that the one who exerts power in the sexual act is the one in the room who evinces the highest masculine image is demonstrated in the same page by von Epp, who encourages Redl to drink by saying: “You’re behind the rest of us. And a good place for you, said someone.”<sup>78</sup> Even the Baron, who holds the highest title and exerts the most aristocratic power of anyone in the ball room, swoons at Stefan at the mere thought of the soldiers exhibiting their male aptitude:

BARON: All that studying and hardening the body and the noontide heat and sweating, and horses! You all look quite beautiful[...]<sup>79</sup>

From these interpretations of merely the first pages of the lengthy scene and those that come later, it is clear that the real power in the room, as has been suggested in the heteronormative world of Act I, belongs to the man who exhibits the greatest masculine politic. Stefan, although dressed in uniform and suggesting an attempt at the same

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 76.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*.

masculine ethos as Redl, is too young, too pretty, and too low a rank to evoke the same response. As well, being Redl's date instantly ascribes feminine status to Stefan.<sup>80</sup> The Baron immediately commodifies Stefan by telling Redl that he "can't leave anyone *that* pretty alone" and offers to trade him with Redl for the Tsarina, despite the fact that she "belongs" to Kunz.<sup>81</sup> The Baron's masculine capital, although he is "striking" in drag as Queen Alexandra, is augmented by his status in the world outside of the ball, but further by the fact that Osborne's stage directions still identify him as "an imposing man."<sup>82</sup> Moreover, he remains one of the "discreet drag queens" whose sex, unlike those rich queens of category 4 with "elaborately over made-up faces," is never in question. Thus do we get the sense during the suggestion of a trade that two true men are discussing the exchange of property, regardless of the Baron's outfit. "Forgive me, I feel I'm unwanted," Stefan says to Redl, to which the Baron responds: "Nonsense. You're *wanted*."<sup>83</sup> While Redl is denied the opportunity to agree to the deal by an interruption, he nonetheless "considers" it.<sup>84</sup>

Redl later allows himself to be drawn to a table by the Tsarina and the Baron's demi-monde, Ferdy, as they whisper girlishly to him. During the hushed conversation, both the Baron and Kunz evaluate the boys, trying to decide whether Ferdy makes a prettier Susanna than he would a Cherubino. Kunz then surprises the Baron by confessing

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<sup>80</sup> KUNZ: Who's the little flower with Redl?  
 BARON: No idea. *Something's* made her wilt.  
*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 72.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 78.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 77.

that he brought a woman to “spice your party a bit this year.”<sup>85</sup> The Baron is uproarious with amusement, and a game is quickly devised for the Baron to guess which one she is in the crowd. The fact that the Baron misses his guess by pointing out the doorman illustrates the correlation between the function of a person at the ball and their femininity. A subject of pure derision, a spectacle, unnamed, the only true woman in the scene still serves as the most objectified being in a room of men masquerading as women.

Kunz and the Baron continue to talk, forming the idea of creating an Empire of “Ex million Queens,” and judging nationalities based on stereotypes of queerness.<sup>86</sup> Praising Redl, the Baron mentions that Redl owns an Eton straw boater hat which he “hangs over his bed like a trophy,” which “belongs to the younger son of a British Ambassador.”<sup>87</sup> The English being the second most queer in the Baron’s estimation after the Germans, this is an accomplishment indeed. The discussion of the boy compels the Baron to ask Kunz about his own son.

BARON: [...] And the boy?  
 KUNZ: *He’s* all right, if that’s what you mean.  
 BARON: You mean you’re *not* all right?  
 KUNZ: Who knows?<sup>88</sup>

This begins a recurring theme in Acts II and III in which homosexual men consider their own condition. Those who strongly demonstrate the post-war masculine ethos, such as Kunz (who came to the party dressed in a male costume) and Redl, will continue to show ambivalence about whether or not homosexuality is a mental or

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*.

physical malady, while those homosexuals who adhere less to masculine politics defend homosexuality as a perfectly natural phenomenon. It is difficult not to see Osborne as painting a picture that homophobia correlates with representational manliness, in this regard. Later on in the scene, when a group of characters are discussing Dr. Schoepfer (who, judging by the “A New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality” is based on Sigmund Freud: see Conclusion), the Baron remarks:

BARON: I understand the inner secrets of my nature perfectly well. I don't admire them, but I do know them, anyway better than this Dr. Schoepfer.<sup>89</sup>

The sexuality of Stefan is questioned at one point in the scene, which puts Kunz immediately on defensive. He threatens to beat Stefan's “sanctimonious head in,” if he “sneers” or judges “the world at carnival time.”<sup>90</sup> The heat between Stefan and Kunz is interrupted as Redl is hailed by Kupfer, who killed Siczynski in the duel in Act I, Scene One. They exchange strained pleasantries until Ferdy remarks that she finds Kupfer beautiful, which “REDL doesn't think this at all funny.”<sup>91</sup> Immediately Redl, who was beginning to relax, giggle, and flirt with the girls of the group, begins to distance himself, revealing his true thoughts on the social politics between him and the rest of the ball.

KUPFER: What's [Dr. Schoepfer] talk about?

FERDY: Why, *us*. He sounds an absolute scream. Can't stop talking about it.

REDL: Us? Speak for yourself.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 88.

Redl's homophobia, which until this scene only had himself as a target, is now expressed outwardly to one of the most effeminate men in the room. It is no coincidence that Ferdy will be the character with whom Redl becomes violent at the end of the scene. The scene becomes loud and chaotic as the more effeminate queens begin to swap increasingly competitive stories about their coming out, and what doctors, priests, and other authority figures recommended to combat their homosexuality. Redl, quite apart from this group now, is approached by the only man in the room who is confirmed by the stage directions as straight: a man dressed as Figaro. Increasingly incensed by the camp of the queens, Redl is "like a frozen ox" when Figaro says an aside to him.

FIGARO: I hate these screamers, don't you?<sup>93</sup>

The sexual tone of the stories becomes more graphic and transgressive, a rising tension for Redl, who is struggling to repress his hatred.

LADY GODIVA: I used to go to the priest after I'd confessed I was in love with Fritz. Then I used to lie like crazy about it, and say nothing was happening, although we were having sex regularly. And he'd give me absolution and say, 'It may not take on immediately—'.

*(Laughter.)*

LADY GODIVA: If Fritz moved his little finger at me, I'd go back. Then he went with a girl suddenly and got married. When she was pregnant, we had beers together, and he pinched my arm and kissed me. Then he laughed and said: You know what you are, find someone else the same. . . . But he laughed . . .

FERDY: I should think so, you sappy little thing.

*(FERDY is bored with all this and wants attention.)*

I only went to a doctor once and he just said take more exercise, dear. So I did.

*(He executes a skillful entrechat to general amusement till REDL*

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

*strikes him hard across the face, knocking him down right into the other guests. The boy is stunned by the force of it. Silence.)*<sup>94</sup>

Redl crisply asks the Baron for forgiveness and exits. Redl's violent outburst brings back the image of Act I, Scene Nine: a homophobic rage that betrays Redl's hatred of himself and those who are like him. The homosexual hom(m)o-sexuality of the scene, however, gives Redl license to enact violence on the appropriate target: the most effeminate of the men in the group, the easily traded commodity—not because, as Gilleman suggests, because Ferdy's behavior “implies a freewheeling quality and insouciance that are deeply false.”<sup>95</sup> This is demonstrated by the Baron's nonchalance and even his frustration with Ferdy.

BARON: Someone pick up poor Ferdy. You silly boy! I knew you shouldn't have flirted with Colonel Redl.<sup>96</sup>

The Baron quickly restores order as if nothing had ever happened, and Ferdy returns to singing a Mozart aria, as he did at the beginning of the scene.

## SCENE TWO

Scene Two consists entirely of a monologue by Dr. Schoepfer, who is lecturing on sex. Cross-references between this scene and “A New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality” will be made in my Conclusion.

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 91.

<sup>95</sup> Gilleman, *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*, 151.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*.

## SCENE THREE

Redl meets with Stanitsin and Oblensky, who have drawn him there by a ruse. Oblensky presents Redl with the file they have kept on him, which contains “rather unusual bills” Redl has accrued over time, including one for a “gold cigarette case inscribed ‘to dearest Stefan with love, Alfred’.”<sup>97</sup> Redl explains that the case is for his nephew, and his “immediate humiliation is so evident.”<sup>98</sup> The file also contains a love letter “in the style of Pushkin” that is “not addressed to a woman.”<sup>99</sup> Finally, Oblensky presents signed affidavits by:

OBLENSKY: [...] The page at the Grand Hotel, a musician at the Volksgarten—this is only the last six weeks, you understand—a waiter at Sacher’s, a Corporal in the Seventh Corps in Prague, a boatman in Vienna, a pastry cook, a compositor on the ‘Deutsches Volksblatt’ and a *reporter* on the ‘Neue Freie Presse’. (*Pause.*) One right-wing paper, one liberal, eh?  
 (REDL *puffs on his cigar.*)  
 REDL. (*slowly*). Whores. Bribed, perjuring whores.<sup>100</sup>

Whether or not Redl calls them whores from anger at the treachery or to dissuade Oblensky, it is clear that Redl’s list of lovers were treated in the same hom(m)o-sexual fashion as prostitutes, as evidenced by the number of them and their trades. After presenting photographs, Oblensky proposes to offer Redl an arrangement. Pitted against this arrangement is the threat of Redl losing his way of life, primarily in the freedom to sleep with men.

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<sup>97</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 94.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*



OBKLENSKY: [...] Would you, do you think, *could* you change your way of life, what else do you want after all these years, what would you do at your age, go back to base and become a waiter or a washer up, sit all alone in cafés again constantly *watching*?<sup>101</sup>

It is at this point in that the play's comment on Redl's homosexuality presents an interpretive challenge regarding homophobia. The way in which Osborne has framed the play makes Redl's homosexuality responsible for his entire tragedy: it is the cause of his desperate struggle through Act I and the violence enacted on him in Scene Ten, it is the weakness Oblensky uses to blackmail Redl in Act II, and it the threat of losing his homosexual freedom that compels Redl to accept Oblensky's deal.<sup>102</sup> Now, as earlier, Osborne "thus depicts a homosexual lifestyle as a life of inevitable victimization."<sup>103</sup> "You're a romantic," Oblensky says to Redl in Act III. "You lust after the indescribable, describe it, to yourself at least, and it becomes unspeakable."<sup>104</sup>

Finally, Oblensky presents Redl with a package containing seven thousand kronen. In this moment, by accepting it, Redl allows himself again to be commodified, to accept the subservient position as he did at the end of Act I. He is wholly within the power of those who exert masculine politics over him, who can blackmail him based on

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 96.

<sup>102</sup> "Osborne's Redl is the model of the promiscuous homosexual. He beds eight young men in six weeks, after he has lost his own male lover to the countess who once hankered for him. His vulnerability to blackmail is increased, therefore, by an emotional isolation and desperation that is made to seem typical of homosexual life in the Empire." de Jongh, *Not In Front Of The Audience: Homosexuality on Stage*, 114.

<sup>103</sup> Gross, "Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in *A Patriot for Me*" *John Osborne: A Casebook*. Patricia D. Denison, editor, 150.

<sup>104</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 114.; "In this definition [of homophobia], the external forces that serve to oppress homosexual men in *A Patriot for Me* cease to exist, and the closet is constructed solely by the subjectivity of the male homosexual. In the light of such a definition, Redl's fear for his position, the violence he was subjected to, and the blackmail that forces him to betray his country, all disappear. It becomes completely a matter of his own self-loathing. From Oblensky's point of view, Redl alone is responsible for his oppression." Gross, "Seduced by Meritocracy: Class and Sexuality in *A Patriot for Me*" *John Osborne: A Casebook*, Editor: Patricia D. Denison, 152.

his homosexuality and can pay him for the privilege of doing so. It is this second image of being at the mercy of his nature—precisely as he was with Siczynski at the beginning of the play and with Paul at the end of Act I—that will prove rhetorically significant at the end of Act III, where Redl refuses to be without agency any longer. At this point in the play, however, Osborne has created a clear narrative on the structure of the masculine ethos and Redl’s place within it.

### ACT THREE

#### SCENE ONE

By the beginning of Act III, Redl has achieved the height of success as measured by his Act I world: he retains a “baroque” and “luxurious” apartment in Vienna; the number of his extravagant personal items is so great that he doesn’t mind being robbed by the young anonymous lover who slips from his bed at the opening of the scene, so long as he doesn’t take the cigarette case or the watch.<sup>105</sup> Most illuminating is that Kupfer now lives with him, and performs a role of servitude. The reversal of power from their relationship in Act I cannot be mistaken. He opens the shutters and answers Redl’s demands as Redl reclines in his bed, smoking a cigar. Kupfer announces that Stefan has married “the bitch” Countess Delaynoff, who is waiting to see Redl.<sup>106</sup>

Delaynoff’s marriage to Stefan is a point of particular pain to Redl, who loved Stefan despite him most likely being heterosexual. Stefan as a subject is still discussed, as he was at the drag ball, as though he is a prize to be won.

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<sup>105</sup> Osborne, *A Patriot for Me*, 99.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

REDL: So: you pulled it off.  
 COUNTLESS: Alfred. We've endured all of that. Can't we—  
 REDL: No. What's he doing, marrying *you*?  
 COUNTESS: He loves me. No more . . .  
 REDL: I suppose you're calving.  
 COUNTESS: I'm having his child, Alfred.  
 REDL: I knew it! Knew it!  
 COUNTESS: He *would* have married me. He was disgusted by your behavior.<sup>107</sup>

Osborne betrays Redl's masculine sensibilities by (however rightfully) making the assumption that Stefan is forced to marry the Countess after impregnating her: that the only way she could be worthy of marriage is by deception and biology. His next admonition of her being a "whoring spy" is sharp indictment of his own ambivalence of allegiance, as Redl, too, is a spy for the Russians, selling himself for two sides at once—but that sort of hypocrisy is never addressed. What follows, Redl's declaration of love for Stefan, is the first monologue of the melodramatic, harsh Osborne style in the play. The points of his authority do not discuss Stefan as a person, however, but as an object, as if he were describing a statue.

REDL: [...] I tell you this: you'll never know that body like I know it. The lines beneath his eyes. Do you know how many there are, do you know one has less than the other? And the scar behind his ear, and the hairs in his nostrils, which has the most, what colour they are in what light? The mole on where? Where, Sophia? I know the place here, between the eyes, the dark patches like slate—like blue when he's tired, really tired, the place for a blow or a kiss or a bullet. You'll never know like I know, you can't. The backs of his knees, the pattern on the soles of his feet. Which trouble him, and so I used to wash them and bathe them for hours. His thick waist, and

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<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

how long are these thighs, compared to his calves, you've not looked at him, you never will.<sup>108</sup>

Apart from this monologue having been scrutinized before as not particularly believable or well-written, I submit that it further illustrates the masculine ethos of Redl and his author. His climactic outburst of love does not regard Stefan at all as a person, nor does Redl confess love for any particular piece of his character, but rather atomizes him as a series of physical features for which the Countess can never have full appreciation. Redl's monologue equates homosexual love with an obsession of the male form—a material, fleshly love which is represented in the notebook for the play's research. This reductive idea of homosexual love and identity is reinforced on the next page when the Countess reminds Redl that “every one of *you* ends up, as well you know, with a bottom quite different, much plumper and far wider than any ordinary man.”<sup>109</sup> Redl, demonstrating his refusal to be caged within a homosexual identity, responds that the Countess and people like her “think...you've got a formula for me. You think I'm hobbled, as you say. But I'm free of you, anyway.”<sup>110</sup> This formula of identifying homosexual by their large bottoms is one Redl, in fact, prescribes to, and uses it to frighten another young lover in Act III, Scene Five. The loss of Stefan, as the Countess leaves, is immediately assuaged by his exertion of authority over whatever he still can. He refutes her pity and demands she leave. Kupfer then comes in, and offering to bring Redl the file on the Countess, is met with:

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

REDL: That file is *my* property. And *you'll* do as you're told. I'm going to sleep. Close the shutters.<sup>111</sup>

## SCENE TWO

The exercise of power over Kupfer, who once lorded class and masculine authority over Redl, becomes complete in this scene, wherein Redl is sending Kupfer to St. Petersburg for a year against Kupfer's wishes. The air with which Redl explains his decision to Kupfer clearly communicates that Kupfer's arguing against the fact is futile: Redl has him in his hands to do with as he likes. Kupfer insinuates that Redl only wants him out of the house so another lover, Mischa, can take his place. Redl turns this accusation into a matter of ethics.

KUPFER: If only you'd at least admit it's because of Mischa. Why can't you be honest?

REDL: Because honesty is no use to you. People who don't want it are always yelling the place down for it like some grizzling kid. When they get it they're always miserable. . . . Besides, Mischa is getting married, as you know.<sup>112</sup>

Mischa has chosen a woman who works in a confectionary shop as a wife, and since then has suffered a "nervous breakdown, or whatever they call it nowadays," and it is highly suggested in Scene Three that the cause of such a breakdown is the result of a homosexual forcing himself into a heterosexual relationship.<sup>113</sup> Kupfer then reveals that Redl's primary motivation has been one of envy and self-service (see: footnote 66). It is perhaps these indictments of Redl's character that make his acceptance of the Military

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<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 105.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*.

Service Medal recommendation in the same scene so duplicitous—for catching a Jewish spy, no less. Jews being “outsiders, they feel outsiders, so their whole creed of life must be based on duplicity—by necessity,” we see an obvious parallel with Redl, who demonstrates no sympathy with all those suffering his own otherness.<sup>114</sup> The scene ends not only with Redl lying about the young man driving his car as being his nephew, but by specifically hailing the youngest waiter in the room with the intent on taking him home. Act III, Scene II shows a Redl who, in full control of his life, money, authority, and power, uses it entirely to manipulate subaltern males as he wishes.

### SCENE THREE

Redl visits Mischa in a hospital ward. A surreal scene, Mischa vividly embodies the homophobic trope of homosexual suffering, as his breakdown seems brought on by the strain of living a double life. A very short scene without much dialogue, Mischa directly responds to only one question.

REDL: Mischa, do you know where you are?

MISCHA: On a star, sir, on a star. Just like you. I expect you were sent to Vienna too, sir, because you are the same kind of element as me. The same dual body functioning.<sup>115</sup>

The implication is too much for Redl to handle, and he immediately leaves. It is not suggested in the play that Redl ever sees Mischa again; presumably because his impending marriage and mental state make him useless for Redl. While it could be surmised that Redl comes to visit Mischa in the hospital because he genuinely cares for

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 107

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

him, Kupfer's accusing Redl of getting rid of him to make room for Mischa is convincing, as Redl comes to see Mischa immediately after dismissing Kupfer.

#### SCENE FOUR

The hotel room in which Redl reclines with Oblensky is filled with smoke; Oblensky's tunic is open and they've been drinking vodka like comrades. They speak of Redl's newest conquest:

OBLENSKY: [...] Tell me now, about this new boy, what's it—Viktor—

REDL: He's not new.

OBLENSKY: I thought it was last February.

REDL: December.

OBLENSKY: Five months! Oh, I suppose that is a long time for you.

REDL: How often are you unfaithful to your wife?

OBLENSKY: When I'm not working too hard, and if I can arrange it, daily.<sup>116</sup>

Viktor is virtually an interchangeable subject with an unnamed wife, who is the victim of daily infidelities. The brief defense Redl attempts against minifying Viktor by protesting that he is not "new" is quickly overshadowed by his objectification of him, in that the only conversation concerning Viktor after this is how "extremely" handsome he is, and that he is tall and fair with pale eyes.<sup>117</sup> The interpretation of Redl's masculine ethos, strung together from the numerous observations of the previous scenes, is nearly concluded as Redl concedes:

REDL: [...] If I liked anyone it was because they were beautiful, to me,

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<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

anyway.<sup>118</sup>

While Oblensky mistakes this for romanticism, his deconstruction of Redl's objectification reveals its homophobic character (see: footnotes 167 and 168). This particular kind of stylized objectification is one with which Oblensky takes umbrage.

OBLENSKY: Well, one: you all assume you're the only ones who can understand anything about yourselves.

REDL: (*politely*). Yes?

OBLENSKY: Well, two: frankly you go on about beauty and lyricize away about naked bodies as if we were all gods.

REDL: Some of us.

OBLENSKY: Or else you carry on like—rutting pigs.<sup>119</sup>

Whether or not Oblensky is serving as a voice for the author, it is without a doubt that he is describing the author's primary character, who lyricized Stefan in just such a way in Scene One before sleeping with a host of young men in the following weeks. The Scene concludes with Oblensky lamenting Redl's finding of Russian spies in Cracow, saying that Redl must give him Austrians in return. Redl agrees to give Oblensky Kupfer, which completes the circle of Redl's revenge against Kupfer for slaying Siczynski.

## SCENE FIVE

Scene Five is dominated almost entirely by an abusive monologue which Redl hurls at Viktor, accusing him of being a greedy parasite who loves Redl only for his wealth. Redl threatens to punish him by taking away those perks, and continues to patronize Viktor as he would an animal. Redl's rage turns on himself at the end, his

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.



homophobia surfacing as he loses control of his anger. He even emasculates Viktor (in his own mind) by asserting that Viktor couldn't have sex with a woman, but Redl could. Below, the monologue is reprinted with attention to the language Redl uses that objectifies Viktor and villainizes the homosexual condition.

REDL: Oh, stop screaming, you stupid little queen! You don't want to get married, you whore, you urchin! You just want to bleed me to death. You want more. Dear God, if ever there was a ludicrous threat, you don't want the girl or any girl, you couldn't. I've seen her too, remember. *I could, mark you, and have.* But not you. When I think . . . How do you imagine you would ever have got a commission in the cavalry regiment, you, who would have bought you three full-blooded horses, and paid your groom and mess bills, *and* taught you to shoot like a gentleman, to behave properly as a Fire leader and be a damned piss-elegant horseman in the field? You couldn't open your mouth and make an acceptable noise of any sort at all.

(VIKTOR *weeps softly.*)

You're so stupid you thought you could catch me with a shoddy ruse like that. You'll get no bills paid, nor your automobile, that's the bottom of it, you're so avaricious, you'll get nothing. . . .

VIKTOR: I *do* love you.

REDL: In your way, yes. Like a squalling, ravenous, raging child. You want my style, my box at the opera instead of standing with the other officers. You're incapable of initiating anything yourself. If the world depended on the Viktors, on the people like you, there would be no first moves made, no inexpedient overtures, no serving, no invention, no spontaneity, no stirring whatsoever in you that doesn't come from elsewhere . . . Dear Mother of God, you're like a woman!<sup>120</sup>

Once Redl has illustrated his position that Viktor is paramount to a woman and thus a target of commodity, he moves on expressing what will become his fear of self, his hatred of the homosexual condition as he sees it.

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

REDL: You are thick, thick, a sponge, soaking up. No recall, no fear. You are a few blots . . . All you are is young. There's no soft fat up here in the shoulder and belly and buttocks yet. But it will. Nobody loves an old, squeezed, wrinkled pip of a boy who was gay once. Least of all people like me or yourself. You'll be a vulgar fake, someone even toothless housewives in the market can bait.

*(Grabs his hair and drags him.)*

You little painted toy, you puppet, you poor duffer, you'll be, with your disease and paunch and silliness and curlers and dyed, wispy hair and long legs and varicose veins like bunches of grapes and prostate and thick waist and rolling thighs and big bottom, that's where we all go.

*(Slaps his own.)*

In the bottom, that's where we all go and you can't mistake it.

*Everyone'll see it!*<sup>121</sup>

For Redl, who has embodied the masculine ethos, there can be nothing more horrifying than to be seen as less of a man: the object of derision, devoid of sexual magnetism, powerless and incapable of exerting authority over the Viktors, the women of the gay world. This is the nature of lost virility and all it communicates. Although he collapses in tears and begs for Viktor's forgiveness, promising it will never happen again—precisely the way Jimmy does with Alison at the end of *Look Back in Anger*—the feeling of this scene (and that one) very much impresses that such an abuse will happen again, that the truth of the protagonist is being quickly hushed after the guilt and pain of expressing it.

#### SCENES SIX – TEN

The final scenes of the play move at such a brisk pace and contain so little of Redl that it is not necessary to give full interpretations of them. Redl is discovered by Möhl

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

and Taussig when an espionage letter goes astray. They meet with Redl in his room at the Hotel Klomser, and Redl gives a final monologue about the stink of death on Catholic Spaniards. Taussig hands Redl a Browning pistol and a manual to operate the gun, and they leave Redl to the business of committing suicide. After waiting for five hours in the street outside, they hear the shot that confirms Redl's death.

While the Austrian officers wished to keep Redl's double-agency a secret so as not to create public scandal concerning the elite, thus explaining their offer to allow him to commit suicide, this does not explain Redl's choice of accepting such a deal.<sup>122</sup> In his chapter on "Closet grammars of intention deception," James M. Harding writes:

As an apparent point of honor, his fellow Austrian officers followed the ritualized codes of their own profession and gave him the opportunity to kill himself before he was interrogated. Such ritualized practices are a mode of performance in their own right, but precisely what kind of performance surrounded Redl's suicide is difficult to say. . . . What remains unclear in the historical record of Redl's suicide is whether the rules of secrecy were in play in the suicide itself: whether in the deep structure of a ritualized suicide, the codes of military honor were exploited so that Redl would be unable to implicate potential co-conspirators during the brutal interrogation that would have preceded his inevitable subsequent execution.<sup>123</sup>

While avoiding speculation about the historical Redl's motivations, it can be asserted that the dramatized Redl is enacting agency with his suicide, although the choice between this and execution seems minimal. But what Redl retains by choosing suicide, as Harding mentions above, is that he is absolved from implicating others and thus

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>123</sup> James M. Harding, "Closet grammars of intentional deception: the logic of lies, state security, and homosexual panic in cold war politics". *The Grammar of Politics and Performance*, editors Shirin M Rai and Janelle Reinelt. Routledge, 2014. pg. 202.

maintains a kind of military honor—that he is still, in some respect, one of the men.<sup>124</sup>

The patriotism of this notion aside, Redl thus commits a final act of masculine ethos, by refusing as much as he can to be a tool in the plans of other men. In one way of viewing the scene, suicide allows him to avoid being a commodity of information, and to be an independent author of his own death. More importantly, in my view, Redl then does not have to be part of a world wherein the masquerade of his sexuality has been stripped away, to suffer the public acknowledgement of that piece of himself which he most despises. There is a second way of viewing the scene that is also within the frame of the masculine ethos, however. Although Osborne has written the story of Redl from history and thus is not responsible for the tragedy of his death, by establishing his suicide to be to preferable to the character than the life he has lived before it, the playwright proliferates the trope of homosexual victimization, a life manacled to torment. Because of his homosexuality, Redl, yet again, is faced with a deal that gives the illusion of autonomy, but is forced to make such a decision due to the intractable nature of his homosexuality, a deal that never would have been presented to him if only he had been straight in the first place. In this moment, as in the other turning points of the play, the crucial moment of Redl's exercise of autonomy is decided solely by Redl's refusal to accept himself. It is through this ever-building framework of homophobia and the commodity of men that Osborne wrote a homosexual anti-hero that is so demonstrative of a heteronormative

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<sup>124</sup> This idea will be further explored via pertinent note from the Wolfenden Committee Report in my Conclusion; This is also contrasted against the possibility that being publicly outed and executed as a homosexual would be a sign of solidarity with the homosexual community, as is suggested in terms of imprisonment by the Wolfenden report, which Osborne quotes in his notebook. "There are some for whom a prison sentence may be a salutary shock. P.69 Wolfenden." John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 34.

masculine ethos, and whose tragedy is less one of a homosexual protagonist but an outsider rejecting all identities.

## CHAPTER IV

## CONCLUSION

In the previous chapters, I established that Osborne's homosexual protagonist is an exemplar of the post-war heteronormative masculine ethos. Redl was not the minstrel homosexual of the '60s British theatre, and because of his heteronormative masculinity he was a schizoid figure, a homophobe who sleeps with other men. Similar to Roy Cohn in *Angels in America*, Redl represents a polarity in sexual identification and, simultaneously, a denial of it. This unstable contradiction propagates the confusion of major critics and theorists on Osborne's representation of the homosexual.

What was the impetus for Osborne to write such a conflicted character? While studying John Osborne's archive at the Harry Ransom Research Center in Austin, Texas, I came across an artifact that might provide the answer. A sixty-eight page well-kept notebook containing extensive notes for *A Patriot for Me*, "A New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality" seemed to be a messy jumble of random notes when I first opened it.<sup>1</sup> But after hours of scrutiny and follow-through on some of its most enigmatic passages, the notebook might be a key to understanding a divided Redl. It might also shed light on the identity conflicts of the author.

Numerous textual clues in both the play and the notebook suggest that Osborne believed in Freud's psychopathological understanding of homosexuality. As is generally known, Freud's *On Narcissism* offers the theory that homosexuality is a disorder arising

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<sup>1</sup> Osborne, John. Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432

from narcissistic tendencies, specifically when “a person treats his own body in the same way as otherwise the body of a sexual object is treated; that is to say, he experiences sexual pleasure in gazing at, caressing and fondling his own body,” and that “isolated features of the narcissistic attitude are found in many other people who are characterized by other aberrations,” including homosexuality.<sup>2</sup> The previous analysis of the play and the selected notes following in this Conclusion demonstrate that this is the framework under which Osborne believes homosexuality is created, and that the playwright himself endured a Freudian struggle with the notion of sexuality. As Osborne chose this hypothesis to represent the homosexual in *A Patriot for Me*, it is fitting to interpret the contents of the notebook under the same Freudian framework, particularly of Freud’s notion of latent homosexuality. By assuming a latent homosexuality in Osborne, new questions about Redl’s homophobia can be asked, and explanations for Osborne’s sometimes contradictory attitudes towards homosexuals are provided. Since Osborne was a public intellectual using the theatre as his mouthpiece, his personal research and feelings regarding homosexuality are important considerations. Examination of the notebook provides insight of his professional and personal anxieties with this subject.

Within the play text and the following notebook, elements of Freudian latent homosexuality are identified in a number of ways. First, the level of detail in Osborne’s famous note for the drag ball—and his express wish to write a play about homosexuality for some time before *A Patriot for Me*—communicates a fascination with gay culture that goes well beyond the call of typical stage directions. For example, the image of “Queen

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<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, “On Narcissism: an Introduction”. *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud* (Chicago: William Benton, Publisher. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 1952), 399.

Alexandra diamond dog collar,” judging by its place in the notebook, was conceived by Osborne as early as five years before the production.<sup>3</sup> As well, those with latent homosexuality have been proven to exhibit high levels of homophobia or “admit negative affect toward homosexual individuals.”<sup>4</sup> The homophobic nature of the play and Osborne’s public remarks concerning homosexuals as a social group meet this criterion.<sup>5</sup> Finally, those notes in “A New Play: The Themes of Homosexuality” which are written in first person and that do not appear in the form of lines in the final play, and for which I cannot find other citation, I have assumed to be personal confessions or reflections from Osborne himself, illustrating a struggle with the idea of sexuality and particularly his own.

Importantly, my analysis of the notebook identifies a number of Osborne’s sources for the play, pieces of which are key documents concerning the homophobic nature of 1960s Britain. In some cases, sources that have a completely objective view of homosexuality offer conclusions countered by Osborne in other parts of his notes. Several verses from the Bible regarding homosexuality have been scrawled down including Leviticus 18:22. He makes a brief reference to D.P. Roberts, who most likely appears to have been a doctor who co-authored a report on spectinomycin HC1 in the treatment of gonorrhea in homosexual men in 1972.<sup>6</sup> Subjects and documents also written down and quoted from include the Public Decency Acts of 1885, the Wolfenden Report,

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<sup>3</sup> Osborne, John. Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Adams, HE; Wright Jr, LW; Lohr, BA (1996). "Is homophobia associated with homosexual arousal?". *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1996. Volume 105, Number 3, 440-445.

<sup>5</sup> “England is the homosexual capital of the world.” John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Although the report was written after *A Patriot for Me*’s production, there does not seem to be another name connected with homosexuality at the time that would prove useful for Osborne’s notes.



and Gordon Westwood's *A Minority: A Report on the Life of the Male Homosexual in Great Britain* (1960). It is *A Minority* from which Osborne takes the most numerous specific citations which, even though the study features an introduction clearly sympathetic to homosexuals by John Wolfenden, maintains that "[h]omosexuality is a condition."<sup>7</sup> A number of the quoted source materials in "A New Play" come as well from Freud and the psychoanalytic response to homosexuality as a breakdown in the Oedipal relationship, and that "paranoia is perhaps nothing else at all than disguised homosexuality."<sup>8</sup> Among the more obviously homophobic sources, Osborne has written quotes from *Sexual Offenders and Social Punishment: being the evidence submitted on behalf of the Church of England Moral Welfare Council to the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution, with other material relating thereto* (1956). Many of the references from this particular text are starred, underlined, and circled. In short, the collected notes give a more informed understanding of the genesis of the play, the themes it was meant to address, and the stream-of-consciousness thoughts of the author concerning homosexuality.

It is the dialogue that Osborne forms with his source material that is most supportive of this thesis: the notes he writes in between or perhaps in response to sources that illuminate his own thoughts on homosexuals and likely provide the greatest influence to Redl's character. For example, in the *Sexual Offenders and Social Punishment's* pg. 80 position that homosexuality is "Contrary to Nature," Osborne writes: "V. Good,"

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon Westwood, *A Minority: A Report on the Life of the Homosexual Male in Great Britain*. (Harlow: Longmans, Green & Co. 1960), 4.

<sup>8</sup> John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 56.

presumably that this conclusion is “very good.”<sup>9</sup> For one particularly troubling note: “The urge to kill to produce a corpse to fuck,” I could not cross-reference a specific source.<sup>10</sup>

What is clear from a general overview of the text is that Osborne leaned heavily on the psychoanalysis of Freud to attempt to understand homosexuality: that homosexuality is caused by the breaking of the Oedipal relationship with the mother, a narcissistic placement of the desire for the sexual object onto the self, and that the condition is strengthened by oral and anal regressions to the phallic stage of development.<sup>11</sup> It is from these base readings of Freud and Ferenczi that Osborne draws his conclusion that homosexuality is a narcissistic condition (as rendered in the play), and with that conclusion begins reading the scientific literature and case studies of John Wolfenden, D.J. West, Gordon Westwood, and perhaps D.P. Roberts.<sup>12</sup> In their work, these men speak about homosexuality with objectivity and sincerity, but still designate it as an environmental condition of an otherwise normal male. The testimonies from Westwood’s *A Minority*, drawn from *only* 127 individuals or “contacts,” give the impression that a notable portion of homosexuals struggle with self-hatred, hatred of women, infidelity, assault and robbery, prostitution, and pedophilia—all this from a sample size which even Westwood admits in his own introduction that might not be properly representational.

As the total number of male homosexuals in this country is unknown, it is not possible to say whether this sample is in any way representative. An attempt to make a more refined research would have been incapacitated

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 40.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 6.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 56, 60, 63, 64, 65.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, 33, 48, 65.

from the start as there is so little information about the material we set out to study.<sup>13</sup>

In my reading of *A Minority*, much of the behavior confessed by the study participants can be explained better by a society forcing homosexual actions into secrecy than characteristically deviant behavior (some of the contacts confess similar sentiments). Through these case studies giving a tragic representation of homosexual life, Osborne selects a large number of quotes and ideas that have dramatic potential and writes them in his notebook.<sup>14 15</sup>

This is how the source material is built into Osborne's beginning ideas for *A Patriot for Me*. Throughout and in between these direct and dramatized quotes from case studies have been written paraphrases for potential lines, arguments drawn from peripheral sources that Osborne favored (in particular the Bible and other religiously supported materials), and one or two specific lines, characters, and ideas that would make it into the final draft of *A Patriot for Me*. The line Siczynski says in Act I, Scene One, for example, "What does a man seek in another man? What can he hope to find that is not already in himself?" is taken directly from St. Peter Damian's *Book of Gomorrah* (1051), a text which has been used to vilify homosexuality since its creation.<sup>16</sup> The way in which Redl is beaten and robbed at the end of Act I is taken directly from testimonies in Gordon Westwood's *A Minority*, as is the homophobic notion of hating "the screamers" from the

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<sup>13</sup> Westwood, *A Minority: a Report on the Life of the Homosexual Male in Great Britain*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> "They don't charge you, you just make sure they don't catch you, that's all. J.O. P.49 [circled] *A Minority*." John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 11.

<sup>15</sup> "We're not most of us caught, you know. We are here. We are out there [audience]. We are you." You can't [something] or retreat[?]. We're inescapable. There!" *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*. pg. 53.

drag ball, the idea that “High Anglican [is] *the* homosexual religion,” and others.<sup>17</sup>

Osborne takes an anecdote straight from *A Minority* in which a contact confesses that “Kathleen is very fond of me and I know if I made any advances like that she would take it almost as a proposition of marriage,” although in Osborne’s notes he has changed her name to “Ursula.”<sup>18</sup> This story, like so many of the others that Osborne takes from *A Minority*, never appears in the final version of *A Patriot for Me*.

Beginning his notes on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1961, Osborne originally intended for Redl’s death to take place in “AN EXECUTION SHED,” envisioning it to be “like a chapel.”<sup>19</sup> It is possible, however, that Osborne had not yet settled on the subject of Redl for the plot at all, as on the next page he writes: “Judas as a homosexual moralist,” and “DRAG PARTY.”<sup>20 21</sup> Either way, it is clear from the execution shed setting and the possibility of Judas as the champion of homosexual morality that Osborne very early on was intending to write a victimized homosexual tragedy. This is particularly evidenced by his early note that: “The play should create a masquerade—a substitute for a dream, a nightmare.”<sup>22</sup> It is also clear from his note on physical obsession (below) that he began equally as early with the conviction that homosexuals do not engage in love with other humans, but in

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<sup>17</sup> Westwood, *A Minority: a Report on the Life of the Homosexual Male in Great Britain*. Chapter 8: “The Legal Aspects”, Section F. “Robbery and Assault”, 150-152, 88, 54.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 41.

<sup>19</sup> John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> In fact, the decision to tell the story of the real-life Alfred Redl must have come late in Osborne’s research of homosexuality, as it is not until page 49 of his notebook that he ever writes the name. Interestingly, he writes REDL in large block letters in reference to a highly chauvinistic line which never appears in the play: “All the things that seem dear to me—honor, dignity, truth, courage, and loyalty—have no meaning to women.” The line is boldly circled and marked with a large X on either side. John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 21

physical lust or obsession with themselves, that homosexual love is a pursuit of Freudian narcissism. He writes:

HOMOPHILE –  
Searching more or less the image of oneself in the other.<sup>23</sup>

NARCISSISM P 140 – 141.<sup>24</sup>

HOMO comes not from the Latin for man but from the Greek meaning “sameness”.<sup>25</sup>

No psychology of the homosexual can neglect the interest of the homosexual in his own phallus. P 253<sup>26</sup>

It is this reductive view of homosexuality that becomes the defining point of Redl’s character: his “obsession with physical details of the beloved” and the patriotism for himself.<sup>27</sup> He proclaims this homophobic definition when asked by Siczyński in Act I, Scene One, what a man desires in another that isn’t already in himself, and when he romanticized Stefan’s physical features in Act III. Throughout the notebook, Osborne time and again defines homosexuality (or relies on quotes that do) by reducing it to a form of abnormal otherness for which “Freud himself held out little hope of cure.”<sup>28</sup>

No one has ever changed a real queer into a normal.<sup>29</sup>

The popular idea that most homosexuals could have it better if they

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 10. This quote is from a doctor who was also a contact in the *Minority* study. Gordon Westwood, *A Minority: a Report on the Life of the Homosexual Male in Great Britain*. (Harlow: Longmans, Green & Co. 1960), 45.

wanted to, but the trouble is that most of them prefer to remain as they are.<sup>30</sup>

“The Normal and Divinely Ordained human condition is heterosexual.”  
[underlined, circled] PG. 75, [*Sexual Offenders and Social Punishment.*]<sup>31</sup>

Part of Osborne’s discursive notation begins on page 7, whereon he writes several notes pertaining to evasion of frank discussion stereotypical of the British, the interchangeability between a male and female “Mother,” and the Possessive Female archetype. At the bottom of the page he switches suddenly to first-person:

I envy people who don’t have to spend time playing a part.  
[underlined]  
How lucky you are to have a part to play!<sup>32</sup>

Again, it is impossible to know whether or not this line is a private note of Osborne’s personal thoughts or intended to be a line for a future character in the script. Unlike several lines which seem to be designed for the play, however, it is not written in quotes and the general sentiment does not appear paraphrased anywhere in the final play, nor is it found within the personal testimonies published in *A Minority*, which lead me to read them as personal confessions. Many such entries occur in the notebook, including:

I thought I was unique.  
But I’m not.  
I’m not unique.  
How I wish I wasn’t.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 15. This seems to be a personal response to one participant in the *Minority* study who says: “Until then, I thought I was unique.” Gordon Westwood, *A Minority: a Report on the Life of the Male Homosexual in Great Britain* (Harlow: Longmans, Green, & Co. Limited, 1960), 56.

I've given up the struggle.<sup>34</sup>

I AM CONCERNED FOR MY VIRILITY.<sup>35</sup>

It's so exhausting, having to keep up appearances.  
Thank God, it's out anyway. At least I don't have to pretend any more.<sup>36</sup>

What am I? An [unreadable] development or a natural deviation?  
Am I a disease?  
If I am ill, is my [true] self diminished?<sup>37</sup>

I've never had enough love!<sup>38</sup>

I've been tampered with.<sup>39</sup>

How can I make sure Mother won't find out?<sup>40</sup>

The Underground – being pressed together on the Tube. All these  
bodies.<sup>41</sup>

It's all I ever think about.<sup>42</sup>

The Effort of Acting out a Role.<sup>43</sup>

What makes these passages interesting is that they could be virtually interchangeable between the then-hypothetical Redl and his author: they have as much potential to have been lines for the final script as they do to be private confessions of Osborne. The Freudian implications of these writings are obvious, particularly where

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 55.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 25. Potentially in response to one contact being told by a cop that if he didn't confess, the cop would have to tell his mother. Osborne's note, however, seems more personalized than the account justifies. Gordon Westwood, *A Minority: a Report on the Life of the Male Homosexual in Great Britain* (Harlow: Longmans, Green, & Co. Limited, 1960), 138.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*.

they communicate a repressed homosexuality. It is my reading of the material that much of Osborne's view of homosexuals is, in fact, informed by his own latent homosexuality: Redl's internalized homophobia would have been parallel to those of Osborne, who grew up in a homophobic culture and suffered a complex relationship with his own mother.<sup>44</sup> It would be a poetic thing indeed if Osborne, struggling with his own sexuality while straining to secure his masculine identity, had written an autobiographical character to explore the most secret of struggles for men of the time.

It is this binary language of healthy or deviant, natural or abnormal, virile or sterile, that perpetuates the masculine ethos in *A Patriot for Me*. Concern with virility is as much to say concern with manhood—and its post-war antithesis, homosexuality—as Osborne ruminates:

Our conception of what is MANLY.  
Let us see it.<sup>45</sup>

This notebook illustrates Osborne's anxiety surrounding masculine identity and his struggle with it. And how could Redl and the final product of the play have avoided being homophobic when—even without considering Osborne's repressed homosexuality—so much of Osborne's source material asserted homophobic conclusions?

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<sup>44</sup> John Heilpern, "Mother and Son." *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man*. (Vancouver: Vintage, 2006)

<sup>45</sup> John Osborne, Reg. no. 13432. Folder 1.2: Osborne - Notebook - "A New Play. The Themes of Homosexuality 1.5.61" R13432, 35.



In the Old Testament its Law condemns to death the man who commits the abomination of [something], and its [something], by lying with mankind as with womankind. Leviticus XVIII 22.  
SODOMITE. DEUT. XXIII.17<sup>46</sup>

St. Paul. Romans. 1.27  
1 Corinth VI 9-10  
1 Timothy 1.9-10  
Romans 1.26<sup>47</sup>

The Employment of the Sexual Faculties for their Appointed Purposes.<sup>48</sup>  
[circled] P 76-77 [*Sexual Offenders and Social Punishment.*]

You should regard them as you would sufferers of T.B.  
Sir Thomas More.<sup>49</sup>

The notebook also references the Biblical history of male prostitutes (Kadesh) and the “horror of Ham seeing his father lying naked in his tent” in Genesis.<sup>50</sup> While these and other notes could be regarded as research necessary to recreate the homophobic environment of turn of the century Austria and the mirror the similarly homophobic environment of 1960s Britain, none of these precise citations make it into the final script of *A Patriot for Me* and are written with some of the most deliberate handwriting of the entire notebook. Examination of the complete text frequently yields the fact that it is those notes which demean, patronize, criticize, and dehumanize homosexuality that bear the marks of stars, underlines, and circles: these were the notes about which Osborne was most enthusiastic. A broad reading of the notebook suggests a homophobic Osborne using these sources to justify his tragic vision of the doomed homosexual deviant. Indeed,

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 38.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 47.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, 42.

judging from the blocked and circled note on page 36, Osborne even considered titling the play “Unnatural Offences; or The Men.”<sup>51</sup>

These Freudian notions of latent homosexuality were demonstrated in Osborne’s public life as well. He responded to Noel Coward’s question of “How queer *are* you?” with “Oh, about 20 per cent;” appeared for the opening night of *Epitaph for George Dillon* “arm-in-arm with a gay black tailor who’d introduced him to nightlife in Harlem;” and was the subject of a post-mortem tell-all by his former houseboat flatmate and colleague Anthony Creighton, who claimed they had been lovers.<sup>52</sup> These and *many other* flirtations with homosexuality by Osborne can be read in two distinct ways: either Osborne was presenting small displays of his repressed sexuality in characteristically taboo moments, or that these were public ridicules of homosexuality that might be consistent with latent homosexuality.

Heilpern writes an entire chapter, “The Subject of Scandal and Concern,” about the possibility of Osborne being homosexual but maintains these are all jokes on conservative attitudes towards sexuality, “baffling and outrage to the guardians of acceptable English mannerisms,” and that such sexual blasphemy was, akin to Max Miller’s “an antidote to English drabness.”<sup>53</sup> From my perspective, if such performances were truly in jest or in rebellion, the nature of their homophobic humor suggests a latent homosexuality. Nicholas de Jongh agreed, as he wrote in Osborne’s obituary: “He was famously and consistently homophobic, and according to Freudian theory his anti-

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>52</sup> John Heilpern, *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man* (Vancouver: Vintage, 2006), 136; *Ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 137-137.

homosexual vehemence could be read as an attempt to suppress what was struggling for expression in him.”<sup>54</sup>

It is because of this chapter in his biography that the notebook containing Osborne’s notes for *A Patriot for Me* is of particular interest, as it has coincidentally been studied and written about specifically by, as far as I can tell, only one other person: his authorized biographer, John Heilpern. Heilpern references the notebook in his chapter on *A Patriot for Me* on only the first and second page, and seems to think of them as little more than “random notes.”<sup>55</sup> I believe there is reason to think Heilpern might diminish the scholarly importance of this notebook, and he does so by calling these notes “random” and by stating that he came across “some thirty pages,” when by my count there are *sixty-eight* (plus a few miscellaneous notes in loose pages and on the back cover).<sup>56</sup> Heilpern utterly disregards the materials that Osborne drew on as sources and inspirations for social and political elements of the play.<sup>57</sup> The notebook, furthermore, was well-kept and does not give the impression of randomness nor was it insubstantial in creating the final vision of the play. Heilpern would rather have regarded the notebook as peripheral notes for the play rather than open the biographical can of worms that some of the materials implies. This I cannot say for certain: but what can be said is that many of the thoughts inscribed in the notebook use first person pronouns in such a way that the speaker of the those thoughts—a fictional character or their public intellectual author—

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<sup>54</sup> de Jongh, Nicholas. “The Osborne Deception”. *The Evening Standard*, 29 December, 1994. (Cited by Heilpern, 138.)

<sup>55</sup> Heilpern, *John Osborne: The Many Lives of the Angry Young Man*, 301.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> It is possible, but from my observations unlikely, that he was counting one “page” as a complete open surface, as the notebook opens vertically and presents a continuous place of writing space over the spine, but doesn’t read in such a way and would be an uncommon way of measuring page-length.

must be questioned. Osborne's homophobic depiction of homosexuals, his public ridiculing of them, his political writing scrutinizing them, and the intrigue surrounding his potential homosexuality along with the ruminations of this notebook make the charge of latent homosexuality too strong to ignore. It is my view that this notebook suggests Osborne's latent homosexuality and that the only other person to write about it has purposefully ignored this real possibility.

In conclusion, the John Osborne corpus, from his public statements, his play, and his private notes make some points of his life, his politics, and his dramaturgy very clear: Osborne was publically a heterosexual who struggled his more and political feelings on homosexuality. His political feelings towards the homosexual movement were informed by the psychoanalytic conclusion on the nature of homosexuality, which is represented in *A Patriot for Me*. His personal feelings seem to be influenced by a combination of his own experiences with homosexual friends, his latent homosexuality, and his religious identity. The play prompts questions about the autobiographical nature of the character, as Osborne displays anxieties about homosexuality identical to Redl's. While the examinations of this notebook certainly raise autobiographical questions regarding the possibility of Osborne's latent homosexuality, it is without doubt that such a notion was thrust away from the public eye by Osborne's overpowering sense of manliness, which is also paralleled by Redl in *A Patriot for Me*. As the connections between Redl's political and private lives to Osborne's similar attitudes continue to be unearthed, the likelihood is that *A Patriot for Me* is about much more than a mere outsider anti-hero, but is evidently

a window into Osborne's personal struggle with masculine politics and homosexuality, an interrogation of his own identity.

However, in spite of Osborne's masculine ethos, the play in its time still offered progress of a kind for those who could witness an empathetic homosexual on stage for the first time. The fight for a non-censorious theatre in Britain and the free representation of homosexuals on stage meant that complete normativity was not immediately possible. True to the "well-meaning liberal" that he was, Osborne wrote a play with a protagonist with whom he identified, and one with which a number of heterosexual men in 1965 could likely find dramatic empathy. Writing a homophobic hom(m)o-sexual was, perhaps, an important moment for the homosexual community of the mid-60s, because it meant that a homosexual could at least be staged without minstrelsy or comic artifice. Meanwhile, contemporary audiences have the luxury of seeing the play both for what it was and what it attempted to do, while acknowledging its failures in representation.

Osborne, like Miller and Williams in the words of Savran, attests "in [his] subversion and reinscription of gendered categories and phallic sexuality... to the continuing promise—and the failure—of the liberation movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s," and also "epitomize[s] the contradictions circulating around the modern homosexual subject who has internalized homophobic cultural values."<sup>58</sup> And as there is no doubt in Savran's mind that these great writers "cannot, despite their best attempts, cancel or transcend the hegemonic sexual ideology" into which they were born, so too Osborne was manacled to the prevailing wisdom of his time, such as it was.<sup>59</sup> Perhaps, in

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<sup>58</sup> Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 173.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

light of the gay splendor he managed to stage at great cost to himself, his theatre, and his reputation, the critical reader (myself included) can see *A Patriot for Me* not only as an unfortunate proliferation of the post-war masculine ethos, but a necessary struggle with it as well.

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