

Through the closet with Ken and Joe

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Studies in Theatre and Performance

Through the Closet with Ken and Joe: a close look at clothes, poses and exposure.

--Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	<p>It is fitting that the prurient fascination that surrounds Joe Orton's life, work and death should be fed by Orton's determination to position his body in the public eye. It is hard to think of another playwright whose naked, or semi-naked, body has appeared in print so often, or indeed, at all. In this respect, as in many others, Orton stands out from his contemporaries. Through detailed analysis of his diaries, correspondence and interviews as well as close study of photographs of him this essay explores Orton's self-presentation through clothing, his understanding of the politics of dress and the invitation and challenge this offered to audiences of his work and interviews. This project also requires a detailed consideration of Orton's partner Kenneth Halliwell's clothing and challenges the still depressingly pervasive view of him as a middle aged nonentity'. Developing Simon Shepherd's work on Orton in <i>Because We're Queers</i> (1989) in to the realm of material culture I suggest that, like the collages they produced, Orton and Halliwell's self-presentation presented an invitation and challenge to look again, and look closely, at their work and the queer challenge it presents.</p>

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Through the Closet with Ken and Joe: a close look at clothes, poses and exposure.

The weekly takings [for *Loot*] at the Criterion seem to have slumped again.

Perhaps you ought to arrange for me to appear nude at the Victoria Palace to give the show a boost.ⁱ

Joe Orton wrote this to his agent Peggy Ramsay from Tangier a few weeks after he had been drawn by Patrick Procktor wearing only a pair of socks (Fig 1) for the programme of the Royal Court's double bill *Crimes of Passion* (comprising *The Ruffian on the Stair* and *The Erpingham Camp*)ⁱⁱ. The ongoing success of *Loot*, the show which had taken two years to become a critical success, is a frequent preoccupation in Orton's letters, but it's hard to read the tone of this one. Did he write it with teeth metaphorically gritted? As a provoking reference to his popularity with the young boys of Tangier, or a sarcastic reference to the fact that the Sexual Offences Act partially decriminalising homosexual acts was in the process of being passed and homosexual men might feel miraculously liberated and so able to pay to see a naked man?ⁱⁱⁱ Or, given Orton's fondness for provocation and the fact that the *Black and White Minstrel Show* had been playing at the Victoria Palace since 1962, is it a tasteless reference to his tan? One never quite knows with the adult Orton: on the one hand, every word, gesture and pose uttered or struck, on-stage or off, seems calculated to create an effect. In the diaries he wrote with a view to publication, he records several occasions on which he hoped to shock Ramsay with his remarks and several others in which he hoped to shock passers-by. On the other hand, as Simon Shepherd has noted elsewhere (Shepherd 1989), and Stephen Farrier (Farrier 2017) notes in this volume, Orton's letters and diaries record racist, sexist and snobbish sentiments, and this may be one of them. Whatever the context for the

remark about appearing naked at the Victoria Palace, it signals (among other things) Orton's rising fame. Orton's diary gives us a reasonably detailed account of how he ended up posing naked for the programme and the sittings. Commissioning Procktor was *Crimes of Passion* director Peter Gill's idea. Just before the sitting he enthusiastically describes Procktor's recent exhibition 'it's marvellous. There are terrific drawings of Chinamen. And wonderful ones of young boys in their pants' (Lahr 1986, 151). This leads Orton to suggest that he should pose naked, a proposal Gaskill accepts with alacrity (according to the diaries). In his own account Gill describes the purpose of the drawing as 'a souvenir centrefold'^{iv}. Appearing as a centrefold is something that seems likely to have appealed to Orton's vanity, but also, perhaps, to his desire to acknowledge a queer audience and offend, or at the very least startle, a straight one. In *1956 and All That*, Dan Rebellato develops Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's notion of the glass closet and Alan Sinfield's 'open secret' into the idea of double-coding in which a queer audience can be acknowledged and engaged with through mainstream culture. He demonstrates this through a brief but trenchant analysis of *Plays and Players*, a theatre magazine started in 1953 which, when read attentively to double coding, is revealed as:

a pre-eminently queer publication. Its coverage and support of plays which concerned homosexuality was second to none; it campaigned for foreign plays on the subject to be produced in Britain. But more than this, their coverage and advertising implies, when taking *in toto*, a large gay male readership. (Rebellato 1999, 178)

The magazine features include photos of actors and other theatre workers in classic 'physique' poses alongside adverts for photographer Tom Hustler 'pictures (naturally)' (i.e. nude); an illustrated compendium of Greek Love and regular adverts

for 'Vince' – the Soho menswear shop renowned for selling tight tailored clothes. Building on Rebellato's analysis, I want to suggest that Orton's many and varied appearances in the press and in other forms of publicity for his work might also acknowledge and engage with 'a large gay male audience'. The centrefold - an art work commissioned by a gay director (Gill) of a gay writer (Orton) executed by a bisexual artist (Procktor) in which the subject is clad only in socks, a classic erotic physique pose - is one example of this.

Insert Fig 1. Joe Orton by Patrick Procktor, 1967. National Portrait Gallery, London.

It is hard to think of another playwright whose naked, or semi-naked, body has appeared in print so often, or indeed, at all. In this respect, as in many others, Orton stands out from his contemporaries. A survey of the National Portrait Gallery's online catalogue reveals the following: Harold Pinter is listed as a sitter in nineteen portraits and has his clothes on in all of them. An open-necked shirt is as revealing as it gets. Tom Stoppard is listed in twenty and is also always fully dressed. Though there is a delightful picture of him by Snowdon looking Sloaneish in a graveyard (NPG 842). John Osborne, something of dandy, is listed in twenty one and Alan Bennett, whose style has remained consistent over 40 years is listed twenty five times. All fully dressed. All of the above appear in a mix of full length and cropped shots. Orton is listed eleven times and nearly always appears full length, and only once fully dressed. A characteristic he shares with some of the most arresting moments of his plays: Sloane in his pants on the sofa; a corpse undressed in *Loot*, the long lost children and Sergeant Match in *What the Butler Saw* and Kenny in *The Erpingham Camp*. Of course, this is a skewed survey: of the eleven listed in the NPG, four are contact sheets of Orton's semi-nude sessions with Lewis Morley, another five are prints from the session and one is Procktor's drawing. These are among the most

widely circulated image of Orton now and define him for audiences today, but also, perhaps then. In a world where pictures of naked and semi-naked women were available in newspapers, magazines and calendars but sexually charged images of men were, even at this point in the Swinging Sixties, largely accessed through body-building magazines and books on classical art, we should read Orton's insistence on displaying his naked body, or provocatively clothed body as a political act. Matt Cook has suggested that Orton:

self-consciously played with secrecy and revelation and repeatedly changed the stories he told about himself. In this he was responding to a homophobic culture in ways that can be seen to be distinctively queer. (Cook 2008, 176)

Orton's presentation of himself in the pictures accompanying the stories he told about himself are also distinctively queer, and I am using queer here as outlined by Richard Dyer (2001), Simon Shepherd (1989) and Alan Sinfield (1999) to describe a pre- Stonewall, pre-Gay Liberation, pre-Queer theory subjectivity and culture. In particular, I want to foreground Dyer's assertion that:

Just as queerness was always jostling with the range and fluidity of actual sexual practices and with the fact that men attracted to men did not necessarily display the secondary, non-sexual characteristics of queerness, so too the age of queers was not one of unmitigated misery and subjection, of men simply believing and accepting they were awful. (Dyer 2001, 7)

Orton neither believed nor accepted this, and neither do his queer characters. In investigating Orton's understanding and performance of queerness and the complex codes of signification he was dealing in, we need to look beyond the diaries and

examines a whole body of evidence including letters, scrapbooks and personal photographs alongside published playtexts, professional photographs elsewhere and biographies and autobiographies of those who knew and worked with Orton. The nature of Halliwell and Orton's deaths, the themes of the plays and the plentiful supply of images of Orton posing have resulted in these poses and dress as being read as evidence of his homosexuality because he's now chiefly famous for being gay and for dying a 'queer' death. David Van Leer notes, the construction of Orton's biography is now dominated by this violent death, but it began with:

His own adolescent inventions of identity. It continued in both his self-mythifications and the media's celebration (or excoriations) of his achievements. The interpretations did not end with Orton's death, but accelerated; their shape, however, became more uniform as a standard account began to be formulated. (Van Leer 2003, 110)

Looking again at the sources, reading them in the context of the cultures of a time in which dressing or acting 'queer' carried both personal and commercial risks, what is revealed is something even more queer, and more subtle. Orton's changing style and self-presentation are revealed as a series of costumes – signifying some things surely, and other things slightly depending on his audience's horizon of expectations. Like the book covers he and Halliwell created, they invite the viewer to look again, and look closely. At first glance, they 'pass', on close inspection, they challenge. Oft circulated pictures of Orton in his peaked cap signal 'gay' to today's audience habituated to the 'clone' look, but in the 1960s Orton is by no means the only celebrity photographed dressed like this (look at images of Marlon Brando in *The Wild One* or John Lennon in the same period), nor the only lissom youth to be

photographed in leather (images of the early Beatles, Gene Vincent, Marty Wilde, even Cliff Richard are revealing in this respect).^v The queer double-coded element is in the text accompanying the interviews or the style of the pose, or the juxtaposition of the two. As Halliwell and Orton knew very well, context is all: they believed their prison sentence for defacing library books was to make an example of them 'because we're queers'; they laughed as the Lord Chamberlain carefully eviscerated all the heterosexual sexual innuendo from *Entertaining Mr Sloane* and *Loot*, leaving all the homosexual business there for a knowing audience; theirs was a life – both personal and professional - lived attuned to nuance.^{vi}

Insert Fig 2. Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell, Morocco, 1967. Joe Orton Archive MS 237/5/39)

With that in mind, I am also presenting here as detailed a consideration as I can of Kenneth Halliwell's dress and self-presentation. As Orton's partner, the man he lived with, had sex with, shopped with and from whom he borrowed clothes, Halliwell's self-presentation is interesting in its own right, as well as a point of comparison for Orton's own style. In considering him I also hope to challenge the still depressingly pervasive view of Halliwell as 'a middle aged nonentity', an insult theatre producer Peter Willes threw at him 50 years ago because he had dared to wear an Eton tie as a joke (Lahr 1986, 249) and which Orton's biographer John Lahr perpetuated in *Prick Up Your Ears*. Simon Shepherd's foundational work in reappraising the evidence of Orton and Halliwell's work and relationship has, sadly, done little to shift dominant perceptions of their relationship. In Lahr's telling, Orton is self-satisfied and vain, rubbing baby oil into his skin, exercising and preening; while Halliwell fusses about bald, or in an unconvincing wig, miserably overweight and left behind as his sleek young partner frolics in waves of sexual pleasure. In Stephen Frears's film of *Prick*

Up Your Ears, Orton is played by Gary Oldman as a sexy sylph in leather while Halliwell is played by Alfred Molina as a bald prissy queen in a beret and mackintosh tied at the waist making him look like a sack of potatoes. In the 2009 stage adaptation, Matt Lucas's Halliwell embodies the middle-aged nonentity in various shades of brown woolly tank tops, shapeless slacks and braces, more McLeavy or Dadda than a contemporary. The costumes divide hip Orton and square Halliwell, the sexy young thing and the has-been. Yet even a cursory reading of Orton's diaries and the photographs Lahr reproduces in the published version and in *Prick Up Your Ears*, show something else: partners who share clothes, and who appear to be roughly the same height (Halliwell appears to be the taller of the two) and build (see Fig 2), dressed, for the most part, as many other men of their generation.

Photographs of Halliwell published in show a slim, attractive man, relaxed in front of the camera. Their holiday snaps from Morocco reveal more than Orton's narcissistic pleasure in his own image. Halliwell fully dressed astride a canon, a beret tipped back on his head, a cigarette dangling from his lips is sexier (to a straight woman like me, anyway) than the often reproduced image of Orton in his paper stuffed trunks.^{vii} Posing in his striped suit, wide flowered tie and shades in another shot, Halliwell looks the epitome of swinging London.^{viii} Orton's diary doesn't record what else Halliwell wore with his old Etonian tie to Willes's party, but his wearing it suggests a developed sensibility to the codes of clothes and their significance to the right audience. To the uninitiated an old Etonian tie is simply a navy tie with narrow diagonal light blue bands across it at regular intervals. It's discreet and tasteful and speaks of wealth and education only to the 'right' people who move in similar social circles. Rather like the discreet homosexuality of Willes and his friends with their pinky rings and tie pins.

Gay Apparel: at the shops with Orton and Halliwell

Fashion historian Shaun Cole has made an in-depth study of the clothes worn by homosexual men, focussing in detail on the clothes and attitudes of 'ordinary' men rather than the more fully documented upper-class dandies and bohemians.

'Invisible men: gay men's dress in Britain, 1950-1970' draws on interviews with gay men who had been teenagers and young men in the 1950s and 1960s to trace the shift from discreet formal attire to the more flamboyant fashions of the late 1960s which Orton began to favour in the years leading to his death. *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel* (2000) brings together fashion studies, dress history, LGBTQ studies and methods from historiography to chart a wider historical period and social milieu. Both studies provide a useful guide to Halliwell and Orton's dress and their high street shopping habits through the insights the interviewees provide to the codes and modes of dress.

Before John became Joe, before he even went to RADA, his teenage diary provides the odd clue to his interest in his appearance alongside rather more detail on the purchase of sweets, records, what he was reading, his social life and how he felt about working as a clerk. He details saving up for a 'Body Bulk' body building kit and books of sculpture and very occasionally mentions clothes. Like most teenagers of the 1940s he wears the formal attire of trousers, jackets and jumpers. The diary attests to the thrift imposed upon him as a working-class boy, few new clothes but a number of visits to the cleaners for repairs and alterations:

21 February 1949

Fetches my green coat from the cleaners. They have made it lovely. Dyed it dark green and mended it. I am taking my blue coat tomorrow

22 February 1949

Took my blue coat to the cleaners. Hope it is finished soon because we might go to see the Halle orchestra.

Sat 21 January 1950

Fetches my flannel trousers from cleaners (I took them there about 3 weeks ago to be dyed brown). They have dyed them very nice indeed, dying [sic] makes them look more expensive.^{ix}

Bernard Widdowson, a fellow Leicester Drama Society member, described the teenage Orton as always looking 'terribly thin and cold. Winter or summer. He wore the same riding mac and green lovat corduroys' (Lahr 1987, 69). Cole notes the longevity of green clothing as a symbol of homosexuality extending up to the early 1950s (Cole 2000, 63). Orton may or may not have been aware of this as a young man but a diary entry from January 1950 suggests that one of the men interviewing him for a position might have done:

Accountants yesterday. Mum won't let me go tomorrow (not that I would want to). He told me not to come to the office in green trousers and to open my overcoat to see what I had on underneath.^x

In his adult diary Orton suggests he had already had sexual experiences by this age, so there's a good chance that both he and his mum understand the threat, or promise, posed by a man who advises you not to wear green trousers to work and asks to see what you have on underneath your overcoat before offering you a job. This exchange simultaneously draws attention to the signification of certain items to certain audiences and reinforces the importance of dressing the part and its implications for young working-class boys seeking employment. It also foreshadows

the opening of *What the Butler Saw* in which Geraldine's interview with Dr Prentice moves swiftly from questions about her typing speed to a request for her to undress so he can 'see what effect your step-mother's death had upon your legs (Orton 1995, 366).

As many scholars have noted, Lahr constructs Halliwell and Orton's relationship as a doomed enterprise in which Halliwell is a miserable stay-at-home queen and Orton is a roving leather-clad boy about town, but there is nothing in the extant records of their clothing to suggest they always, or only, occupied these roles.^{xi} We might accept that, *pace* Dyer, range and fluidity can extend to modes of behaviour beyond sexual activity. There are as many shots of Orton wearing the kind of clothes 'Halliwell' is costumed in, in dramatic versions of their life: a shirt and tie, jumper and tweed trousers, and even one of him wearing a delightfully practical and unhip pair of fur-lined slippers, but these are not the pictures most often reproduced.^{xii} Those are the ones of Orton in bell-bottomed jeans, white t-shirt and black leather jacket, the ones that promote the image of Orton as what Van Leer calls a 'homosexual rebel' (Van Leer 2003).

In *Prick Up Your Ears*, Lahr quotes several sources suggesting that Orton and Halliwell had a phase of flamboyant dressing; the kind of brightly coloured outrageous clothes or give-away accessories that hysterical newspaper reports suggested were known indicators of homosexuality. In defence of his thesis that 'Halliwell was trying to mould Orton into the Ideal Friend' he cites their RADA classmate and housemate Lawrence Griffin's opinion that:

Halliwell was like a Svengali to John [...] when they went shopping, he'd suggest that John buy certain colourful clothes. He showed John what to wear, what to read, where to go. (Lahr 1987,120)

Lahr also describes Orton's visits back to Leicester to see his family where: 'he liked to outrage them with his loud clothes and brash claims' (Lahr 1987, 88). He gives examples of the brash claims, but not the loud clothes. The line is irresistibly reminiscent of Ed in *Sloane* recoiling in horror at Kath's offer to join one of his executive gatherings: 'We don't want a lot of half-witted tarts [...] Frightening everyone with their clothes' (Orton 1995, 90). In fact, as Orton and Ed know very well, it's queers that frighten everyone with their loud clothes. Or so the received wisdom has it, but as Cole points out in his discussion of Vince's Man Shop, gay men's clothes were often in the vanguard of fashion and colourful clothing was no exception:

The colours of the clothes (bright reds, yellows and purples' were associated in the public mind with 'fairies' and 'queers', but it was not long before fashion conscious young heterosexual men were mailing their way to Vince's.

(Cole 1999, 146)

There are no photographs of the two of them in the Orton archive in these brightly coloured outrageous clothes or give-away accessories.^{xiii} Intriguingly, independent verification for Orton's loud clothes comes from photographer John Haynes recalling:

My last sighting of him was the first night of 'Loot' [the revised version] - he and Kenneth Halliwell arriving in matching suits except for the colour; one orange, one purple. (Haynes n.d, n.p)

It seems incredible that Orton and Halliwell's thrifty living should extend to buying suits, and brightly coloured ones at that. They weren't a prototype Gilbert and George, suits were not cheap and other occasions involving wearing or buying suits in the diaries are recorded in considerable detail. The extant portions of Orton's adult diary cover 1966 and 1967, a period in which his fame and earnings were on the rise. He was invited onto television programmes and to award ceremonies and the diaries record the shopping expeditions he and Halliwell made and what they purchased. Towards the end of 1967, by which time they were reasonably well off, Orton reports a circular row bought on by Halliwell's desire to borrow Orton's blue suit:

'Are you going to wear your blue suit for the summer?' he said. 'No', I said. 'Then why did you have the trousers altered?' he said. 'If you hadn't had them altered I could have worn them.' 'But if you could wear them', I said, 'they wouldn't have fitted me. That's why I had them altered.' 'And now they don't fit me,' he said. 'No', I said. 'But if they fitted you they wouldn't have fitted me. And as they didn't fit me I had them altered. And now I had them altered they don't fit you.' (Lahr 1986,130)

Based on photographs of the pair (like Fig. 2) which show Halliwell as fractionally taller and also showing him with a higher waist (or at least the waistband of his trousers towards the middle of his trunk while Orton's always seem to be further towards his hips) and other comments in the diaries which record Orton leaving trousers to be shortened, I'm assuming that that's what 'altered' means here. If they had suits, albeit brightly coloured ones, why didn't they dye them? We know from his teenage diary that Orton had had clothes dyed in the past. It's possible, just, that the suit Haynes remembers as purple was the blue suit discussed here, though one

would think that a photographer would have a pretty good sense of colour and a sharp visual memory. Otherwise they're unaccountable, in both senses of the word. Orton had discussed buying a 'bright blue suit' for his sister's wedding in the interviews to promote *Sloane* – the only treat, other than smoked haddock, he was awarding himself for his new found success.^{xiv} The suits aren't mentioned in any correspondence about disposing of their effects after their deaths, nor in any coverage of the *Loot* premier, nor did Orton wear it to accept the *Evening Standard* Award. Instead he: 'borrowed Kenneth's striped suit. I wore a wide, flowered tie, a high-collared, striped shirt and boots (suede)' (Lahr 1986, 56). Shortly after he was invited to script the Beatles' next film, he decided to buy a new suit of his own.

Kenneth and I went to look for one. Went to Carnaby Street. I didn't like them much. Cut very good. But the material is poor. Went to John Michael's and tried on a brown suit. Bought it but left it to be altered. In Carnaby Street I bought a purple velvet tie. Very wide. And in Austin Reed's I found a high collared shirt with brown stripes. (Lahr 1986, 75)

Carnaby Street was the centre of swinging London's fashion district. John Michael's was a shop favoured by Mods that specialised in good tailoring and was fashionable but not exclusive. Exactly the kind of place you might expect the newly wealthy Orton to buy his clothes. He and Halliwell had been shopping there earlier that month for more casual attire:

I bought a pair of blue jeans made of cotton [had to have them shortened]. Kenneth bought a black shirt. I saw a pair of trousers made of white towelling but decided against buying them. The colour mainly. (Lahr 1986, 253)

One might equally have expected to find them shopping in Vince's Man Shop which had been dressing gay men since the mid-1950s. As far as his diary and personal papers show, he never shopped there. The shop was established by Bill Green, formerly a physique photographer who visited France on the proceeds of 'selling a bikini-style posing brief, first to his models and then to other 'muscle-boys and butch trade' (Cole 2000, 71-72). Some of the poses Orton is striking in the Morley sessions bear more than a passing resemblance to the 'physique' poses Green had once shot and still used for his adverts. Similar poses featured in Halliwell's collages and in Orton's scrapbook for *Entertaining Mr Sloane*. Green noted the trend for black jeans and black shirts (like the one Halliwell bought in John Michael's) and saw a gap in the British market and opened Vince selling fitted men's clothes: tight jeans and 'Corsair' slacks [...] beautifully cut Bermuda style (and that means a close fit everywhere') (Cole 2000, 74). It was *the* place for gay fashion in the 1960s. Orton and Halliwell may not have shopped there but they did adopt some of the fashions promoted there, notably tight trousers.

Striking poses

looking like a success

An extant family photo of Orton posing at 'The Coppice', his father's place of work, taken around the time Widdowson describes Orton looking perpetually 'thin and cold' shows a young man joyfully posing, sleeves rolled up, in a striped shirt and formal pleated trousers.^{xv} He doesn't look thin or cold, or, as Lahr describes him, as someone struggling 'to build up his mind and body from their undernourished skimpy beginnings' (Lahr 1987, 69). He looks like the future Joe Orton, the confrontational playwright, gazing directly into the camera, challenging the viewer. His stance is

open, legs spread, one arm relaxed at his side, the other reaching up into the branches, perhaps to hold them out of the way, or perhaps to emulate a pose he's seen in one of his books, or in a film.

Insert Fig 3. Joe Orton, 1951 by David Sim. Arenapal

Insert Fig 4. Joe Orton, 1952 by David Sim, Arenapal

As the teenage diary progresses references to his appearance off-stage disappear as his desire to become an actor increases. By the time he gets to RADA his clothes don't warrant a mention. The photographs from this era are taken by studio photographer David Sim in 1951 and 1952. The 1951 shot is labelled 'before sexual awareness' (Fig 3), and shows Orton earnestly gazing off to the right of the frame, hair neatly brylcreemed in a jacket, shirt and tie. The 1952 shot, labelled 'Joe Orton at RADA having become aware of how to 'look' like a success" (Fig 4) shows him approximating the hair style and poses of pop idols like Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochrane – dishevelled hair, swept forward almost into his eyes, white shirt unbuttoned, making a good job of the 'just out of bed look' and once again gazing directly at the viewer. His family agreed that he looked like a young Dirk Bogarde, unbeknownst to them, another homosexual heartthrob. Although he never made it as an actor, over the years Orton seems to have put the acting techniques from RADA to good use, assuming a variety of poses, gaze steady, sometimes challenging, sometimes mocking, sometimes, with eyes downcast, a little coquettish. A studio portrait dated 1960 sees him looking like a potentially angry young man, or worthy working class character in a Wesker play. (Fig 5) He is posed squarely in front of the camera, hair neatly brushed back of his face, wearing a heavy woollen coat. Because these pictures are pre-fame, there is no accompanying text so it's hard to

determine a purpose or subtext for the pictures. Once the pictures are paired with words, double-coding is more easily evident.

Insert Fig 5 Joe Orton, 1960. Photographer Unknown, courtesy of Leicester University Special Collections

Soppy?

Insert Fig 6. 'Gaol and a library are his recipe for fame', *Leicester Mercury*, courtesy of Leicester University Special Collections

A scrapbook in the Orton archive records the publicity generated by, and for, the first production of *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964). In his hometown paper, *The Leicester Mercury*, under the headline 'Gaol and a library are his recipe for fame' (Fig 6), Orton looks out of a picture cropped at the waist, hair short, face serious, dressed in a white t-shirt and leather biker jacket – an outfit not unlike the title character of his play. The rough and ready look is consonant with the tough image he was presenting as an ex-con who had worked as a factory hand and labourer. Not at all the eager young thespian his friends and acquaintances in Leicester might remember. In another image, this time for the *Daily Herald*, he smiles sheepishly into the camera against a backdrop of a city street, still in the leather jacket but this time with a gingham shirt under it. The picture is captioned 'Playwright Joe Orton yesterday ... 'Don't me make me sound soppy' – a reference to the Orton's closing words in the interview. (Fig 7) Is 'soppy' chosen to make us think 'queer', a bit like Sloane implying that Ed's is 'sensitive' (Orton 1995, 113)? Perhaps Orton is not hiding in the closet as critics have previously thought, but covertly inviting readers to consider that he might be queer. He doesn't say anything 'soppy' in the interview, he seems to

have worked hard at appearing anything but, drinking pints of bitter and telling the journalist he doesn't smoke because he can't afford it. His expression in the photograph is not sappy, it's somewhere between smug and sheepish, as if acknowledging the performance of a straight working class ex-con and the distance of it from the astute author of *Sloane* and the Welthorpe letters. Almost as if he has read and agreed with Kenneth A. Hurren's appraisal of the pose:

As for Mr Orton, I confess to some dubiety as to his identity. The dossier provided in the programme [for *Sloane*] may well be part of the jape: born in Leicester (Nottingham or Salford would, perhaps have been more suitable), working class, long periods of idleness, a prison record. It is all just a little too 'with it' to be true. I suspect the hand of some distinguished, old-world critic, an admirer of the theatre that concerns itself with recognisable human situations, aspirations, and dilemmas, out of patience with the praise heaped indiscriminately upon so much aimless latter-day trivia. If I am right, he must shortly reveal himself, now that he has seen how well he has hoaxed his peers.^{xvi}

Insert Fig 7

As befits the creator of *Sloane*, a young man who can present himself as an object of sympathy, menace and most things in between, Orton tries out looks and personas in each interview. In 'What prison did for this playwright', he is posed on his single bed in a tight white t-shirt, flared jeans with a very deep turn-up (another indicator of his short legs) and a pair of baseball boots with his knees up and apart so that the central focus of the shot is his crotch. Covering the entire wall behind him is one of Halliwell's collages. Not only is Orton facing the camera, so is an army of other

faces. American critic Glenn Loney, who became Orton's friend, recalls seeing a similar picture:

... in a Sunday arts section. It showed a pert young man in T-shirt, jeans, and tennis-shoes, casually stretched out on a bed with turned-down sheets. The wall behind him was a psychedelic riot of Old Master art images. (And not, as some who but dimly remember this photo insist, a collage of body-builders. That must have been another part of the wall). The caption revealed that this was a new young playwright who had recently been endorsed and encouraged by Terence Rattigan - whose own reputation was not then at its zenith. Indeed, the fledgling author had some pages of manuscript spread out on the bed, but he was looking neither at them nor at the camera. His gaze was directed stage-right, as if seeing something of which he slightly disapproved. (Loney 1988, 300)

A gay man seeing the body-building collage would have recognised the celebration of 'physique' culture, and the downcast gaze. Loney certainly seems to have recognised something, as meeting him in New York for the first time he registers amusement, and perhaps a little disappointment, at what Orton was wearing.

Perhaps I thought I'd find Orton in black leather, not unlike his Sloane fantasy. In fact, I wasn't quite prepared for the actuality. A very boyish Orton, his face gleaming as if it had been oiled (I think it had been) greeted me warmly. He was togged out in a trim little blue-and-white striped nautical T-shirt and tight trousers. He was charm itself; he fairly twinkled. Sloane, it appeared, was not the only sham-innocent seducer in the Orton stable.

(Loney 1988, 301)

To the discerning gay eye, the description of the outfit is as clear a signifier of his sexuality as Sloane's leather gear (of which more later). As noted above, 'trim' t-shirts and 'tight' trousers were fashionable among gay men in Europe and America and available from Vince's shop in Soho and numerous outlets across the United States.

Sexy Hooligan

In *Because We're Queers*, Shepherd identifies a particular Orton character type as the 'sexy hooligan' (Sloane, Nick, Raymond) and brilliantly analyses the manner in which these characters are dressed, undressed and re-dressed in ways that would have resonated with queer audiences. Sloane, for example, is:

... re-dressed in 'boots, leather trousers and a white T-shirt' – the gear of the homosexual leather bar (yes, there were some in those far-off days), which Orton was somewhat into himself. (As well as having himself photographed nude, he was also photographed in peaked cap and heavy mac) (Shepherd 1989, 101)

The handwritten comment on the back of the photograph described by Shepherd suggests this is a passing phase. 'Joe in his brief period of admiration for facism in the 60s' his young sister Leonie has added.^{xvii} It's not the sexiest picture of Orton, he looks more like Reg Varney in *On the Buses*, than Dudley Sutton as Sloane, or indeed as Pete, the character he played in the 1964 film *The Leather Boys*. The peaked hat is fine, it's the coat, which looks too big and utterly incongruous paired with his houndstooth trousers and what looks to be a collar and tie that gives the

impression that this isn't Orton's outfit. Initially I interpreted the inscription on the back as evidence of Leonie Orton's unawareness of Orton's sexuality and the queer connotations of leather, but now I wonder if this is some kind of joke or ruse by the photographer or Orton. He certainly wore a leather jacket in the *Sloane* publicity photographs discussed above. That leather jacket is different from the one in the 'facist' picture: it has zip fastenings at the cuffs and neck, rather than buttons and it appears to actually be leather. The 'facist' one looks like it might be plastic and appears to be double breasted and three quarter length, rather than waist length. Photographer Lewis Morley remembers a different outfit again: 'black leather, studded with chromium-plated, round headed rivets, like those on an overstuffed Victorian settee. A matching black leather cap rounded off the outfit (Morley 1993, 75). An entry in Orton's diary for 1967 describing a visit to the *Loot* cast offers another variation, reminding us how quickly subcultural attire can become fashionable:

I wore a leather jacket (which I'd found at the bottom of suitcase put away from 1965 when leather jackets went out of date and my cap from Hamburg. As uniforms are now 'in' it looked very way out. 'Oh', said Sheila Ballantine, 'how trendy'. Stayed until the rise of the curtain then left. In Piccadilly a rather slant-eyed and pissed (or drugged) poove sidled past me and said in a low, hot tone, 'I say, how camp'.^{xviii}

The observation that leather jackets went out of date in 1965 is an interesting one – is Orton referring to the queer milieu or to mainstream fashion? Is, 'I say, how camp', an expression of approval or a slur? Cole and others have noted how sub-cultural clothing merged into the mainstream in the 1950s and 1960s, liberated by an

increase in cheap fashionable clothing, Orton, like other men, worked a range of styles. He was not the only young man to have gone around Hamburg in leather in the early 1960s. The Beatles had also embraced the sexy hooligan look before becoming the lovable be-suited mop-tops in 1963. Perhaps when it became apparent that the teenage girl market was rather bigger than that of homosexual men. The leather look, drawn from 'images of bikers and their style', had, according to Martti Lahti been:

disseminated to gay readership through homoerotic physique magazines of the 1950s, such as *Physique Pictorial* premiering 1950 and *Tomorrow's Man* which started 1952. The pictures published in these magazines influenced also Tom of Finland who had his first drawing published in *Physique Pictorial* and who had been familiar with the magazine prior to this. In addition to photographs *Physique Pictorial* featured drawings and paintings by George Quaintance and Etienne, among others, both of whom Tom of Finland names as his influences and precursors (Kalin 1990, 111; Hooven 1993, 84-85).
(Lahti 1998, 191)

But, like colourful clothes, the leather look had also entered mainstream fashion, creating potential confusion among gay men cruising. Aside from being propositioned by a 'poove' in 1967, Orton's diary only recalls one potential leather encounter, also in 1967, in a toilet on Holloway Road. The episode is a good example of the difficulty of reading clothes:

A young kid came in dressed in a motorcyclist's outfit – boots, leather trousers, leather jacket, crash helmet. It was a warm evening and this seemed

odd. I was just zipping up my fly as he came in. I waited a little. Tucked my vest into my pants – it had come loose. The motorcyclist looked over his shoulder and stared. I walked away. He followed me outside. But seemed undecided. I walked away from the bridge to the bus stop. When I looked back, the cyclist was standing staring after me. A middle-aged man, who'd been in the lavatory and had come to the bus-stop, said to me, 'What do you make of him then?' 'He doesn't seem to have a bike, does he?'. I said. 'He's not the law, is he?' the man said. 'Shouldn't think so', I said. 'Where's his bike then?' the man repeated. 'He may not have one,' I said. (Lahr 1986, 246)

It's hard to tell from the tone if Orton feared the man, or feared entrapment. He can't be sure that a man dressed as a biker, is a biker, and whether, if he is a biker, he's a biker looking for sex. Or a man looking for sex dressed like a biker. Or a man dressed up to look like a man looking for sex who is really a policeman. It turns out that he's riding pillion – giving Orton a pang of regret at having perhaps passed up an opportunity for a threesome. Halliwell's verdict reveals another understanding of the code of clothes when he suggest that 'the young man was probably a sado-masochist' (Lahr 1986, 247). This is one of the many occasions in the diary in which it becomes clear that Halliwell is not the sexually repressed housewife Lahr describes, but a man versed in queer culture and subculture.

Developing the body (of work)

Orton's asthma, so present in the teenage diary, never gets a mention in the diaries of his adult life. Was exercise the answer? The teenage diary records him weighing up investing in a Body Bulk course and writing to Charles Atlas at much the same time as his desire to become an actor led him to elocution lessons and his elocution

teacher gave him voice exercises to practice. He describes exercises leaving him exhausted but doesn't specify if these are vocal exercises, or physical exercises, or both.^{xix} Lahr notes that as a teenage Orton shocked his mother by parading 'downstairs swathed in a bath towel and flexing his new muscles from his body-building exercises' (Lahr 1987, 53). His interest in developing his body has become a part of the Orton myth, mainly because of the diaries and the illustrations in them and the way in which Lahr has figured this as a kind of fatal narcissistic flaw, but also because Orton chose to link his body and his body of work in public through commissions like the Patrick Procktor sketch and the Lewis Morley photographs (Fig 8 and 9).

Insert Fig 8. Contact sheet for Joe Orton 1965 session shot by Lewis Morley.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Orton went to Morley's studio above the Establishment Club in Soho in 1965 to have photographs taken for the New York transfer of *Entertaining Mr Sloane*. By this time Morley was a fashionable photographer having taken the now famous image of Christine Keeler nude astride an Arne Jacobsen chair in 1963, but he'd been regularly photographing up-and-coming writers and artists since the 1950s. Of the Morley portraits in the NPG only Orton, Tom Jones, Christine Keeler, and David Frost are nearly naked, and of those, only Jones is not in the famous chair pose. During the session Orton told Morley that 'he wanted it to be known that he was the fittest, best-built playwright in the western hemisphere'.^{xx} In his autobiography Morley described him as 'more like the chap who had sand kicked in his face, or, to be fair, the comparison that sprang to mind was that of a Greek bronze of a youth, removing a thorn from his foot.' (Morley 1993, 78). Orton is no match for the physique models pasted on his walls and scrapbooks it's true, but the contact sheets show him

posing confidently and confrontationally – living up to his reputation as a writer of ‘dirty plays’ who had almost been refused entry to the US because of his criminal record.^{xxi} The kind of chap who has sand kicked in his face doesn’t usually have defined pecs, abs and biceps, or a swallow tattooed on his stomach diving straight for his groin. His diaries, late interviews and letters make it clear that Orton saw his body as a site and source of pleasure and he enjoyed maintaining it.

Writing to Ramsay from New York in 1966 he jokes that his letter will be:

More unintelligible than ever because I’m just writing it after performing it a lot of violent gymnastic exercise – I shall be the most perfectly developed of modern playwrights if nothing else.^{xxii}

This phrase has become permanently associated with Orton’s legacy and is often read as narcissistic, or evidence of Orton’s desire shock. Which it may be, but, as Francesca Coppa suggests, it may also be more subversive than another gesture to *épater les bourgeois*:

Orton’s particular genius was not simply that he took pleasure from the physical body (which is now, ironically, what he is most famous for) but in his ability to see that the taking of a certain kind of physical position was aligned to taking a certain kind of societal position: that the physical body was related to the social body, that one’s relationship to one’s own body had larger cultural ramifications. Orton saw that fully inhabiting one’s own body was *masculine*, and that masculinity was a means of access a certain kind of power. Orton’s attempt to forge a connection between queers, masculinity and power is what I am calling his philosophy of bring “perfectly developed”.

(Coppa 1999, 94-95)

This might explain his decisions to be photographed naked while his contemporaries remained clothed. And may also explain Lewis Morley's disparaging attitude to Orton's slim physique. Coppa sees Orton's flaunting of his body, and by extension, we might suggest, the unclothed bodies that people his plays, as a riposte to the government's desire to stop homosexuals 'flaunting' their sexuality. The 1957 Wolfenden Report led to a relaxation of law but only on the understanding that homosexuals didn't *act* differently in public. By which it meant effeminately.^{xxiii} It follows then that Orton's appearances had the potential to expand the 'sensitive' public's understanding of the range of homosexual types: not every queer acted effeminately and lived a miserable life. Orton often acted 'macho' and asserted his lack of 'sensitivity' – as if reinforcing the straight man he had asserted himself to be in newspaper interviews. But Orton also knew that queers were not always, or only, effeminate and flamboyant dressers. There were a number of looks available, and desirable, to them and Orton worked his way through quite a few of them: bookish young man in tweeds; jeans and leather jacket; the apprentice body builder captured by Morley and latterly the exaggerated flares and flowered shirts of the late 1960s when 'the day of the peacock' legitimised a style of dressing that had previously been almost exclusively the preserve of gay men.^{xxiv}

Insert Fig 9. Contact sheet for Joe Orton 1965 session shot by Lewis Morley.

National Portrait Gallery, London

Neil Tennant, one half of synth-pop duo, the Pet Shop Boys whose own costumes and work has explored a wide spectrum of gay culture, nominated one of Morley's portraits of Orton as his favourite picture in the NPG. Writing in the Members' magazine Tennant describes how:

Morley [or should that be Orton?] turned his famously heterosexual image into a frank homosexual statement: Orton is up for it and happy to announce the fact at a time when homosexual practices in Britain were still illegal. His attitude seems to say 'Why not?' (Tennant 2006, n.p)

Tennant of course, is writing with the benefit of hindsight, and what he sees as Orton's positive 'attitude' in 2006, was, as I have explored here, more subtly conceived in 1966 when a frank homosexual statement could land you in prison or in a mental asylum. Queer, in the pre-1960s usage, maybe, frank, certainly not. Critics differ on the extent to which Orton's 'why not' attitude is symbolic of the coming of gay liberation and queer resistance and attention to his work and life fluctuate accordingly, but in the anniversary year of his death and in the year in which the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in Britain is being celebrated, it's important to acknowledge that the importance of looking closely, and looking again, at what is presented as common sense or evident.^{xxv} Cultural historian Peter Burke suggests that: 'If we wish to avoid the anachronistic attribution of our own intentions, interests and values to the dead, we cannot write the continuous history of anything' (Burke 1997, 1), we must always be ready to re-examine narratives and the sources they are constructed from, to ask 'present-minded questions of the past' but avoid giving 'present-minded answers' (Burke 1997, 2). In the case of Orton, this means looking beyond our contemporary understanding of homosexuality and reassessing his presentation of himself and his lover Halliwell, whose body type and choice of clothes turns out to be not so very different from that of 'Saint Joe: the Homosexual Rebel' created by critics and so rigorously critiqued by Van Leer (Van Leer 2003, 109-139). Joe Orton and Kenneth Halliwell are not our contemporaries, however contemporary some of their ideas or clothes may be – to appreciate their life and

work, we need to remember that. We don't need present-minded answers, we need present-minded questions.

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- ⁱ Letter from Joe Orton to Peggy Ramsay, 26 May 1967. Orton Archive, MS 237/7/10/38/iii
- ⁱⁱ Patrick Procktor (1936-2003), an artist then at the height of his recent fame who 'dressed flamboyantly' and 'flaunted his homosexuality'. 'Patrick Procktor, 'Obituary', *Guardian* 3.9.2003.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Although Alan Sinfield (1990, 2003) and others have discussed Orton's apparent lack of interest in gay rights it would be extraordinary if the Sexual Offences Act's emphasis on decriminalising private acts had eluded him.
- ^{iv} http://www.petergill7.co.uk/pieces/joe_orton.shtml. Accessed 2.10.16
- ^v The output of photographer Harry Hammond, working across the UK in the 1950s and 1960s captures these changing styles. See Alwyn Turner's *Halfway to Paradise: The Birth of British Rock* (2008) for a good selection of Hammond's outputs.
- ^{vi} See Shepherd, *Because We're Queers* (1989); Dorney 'Tears, Tiaras and Transgressives: Queer Theatre in the 1960s' (2007)
- ^{vii} In my 1987 paperback edition of *Prick Up Your Ears*, Halliwell on the cannon is plate 21. On my parents' 1980 paperback edition, which provided me with my first encounter with Orton, the saturated colour version of Orton posing in his paper stuffed trunks was on the frontcover. This is also reproduced in Fig. 8 of *What the Artist Saw: Art Inspired by the Life and Work of Joe Orton*, the catalogue accompanying the exhibition first staged at the Museum of Contemporary Art in London 5 February – 4 March 2017 and moving to the New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, Leicester in July 2017. The most recent edition of *Prick Up Your Ears* uses a picture from the Morley sessions.
- ^{viii} This maybe the 'striped suit' Orton records borrowing to wear to the *Evening Standards Awards* lunch, as the shot is undated, it's hard to be sure.
- ^{ix} 'Teenage Diary', Orton Archive MS 237/1/19/1
- ^x 'Teenage Diary', Orton Archive MS 237/1/19/1
- ^{xi} The questioning of Lahr's construction of Halliwell and Orton's relationship is critiqued most fiercely in Shepherd (1989), but also by a number of the contributors to Francesca Coppa's *Joe Orton: A Casebook* (1993), notably David Van Leer's 'Saint Joe: Orton as Homosexual Rebel' and Randall Nakayama's 'Sensation and Sensibility: Joe Orton's Diaries'.
- ^{xii} 'Joe Orton at Work', Getty Images.
- ^{xiii} There are photographs of them in suede shoes, once, according to Cole, an indicator of homosexuality, but by the mid 1960s, part of mainstream fashion.
- ^{xiv} 'It's Still Fish and Chips for Joe Orton', *Entertaining Mr Sloane scrapbook*. Orton Archive MS 237/1/28
- ^{xv} See 'gallery' at joeorton.org for this image
- ^{xvi} Kenneth A Hurren, 'Theatre' in What's On. Undated clipping from Sloane scrapbook, Orton Archive MS 237/1/28
- ^{xvii} I Had it in Me,
- ^{xviii} Orton Diary, Saturday 25 Feb 1967
- ^{xix} Entries for 7 January 1949 (Body Bulk Course); 'Teenage Diary', Orton Archive, MS 237/1/19/1
- ^{xx} 'My Favourite Portrait by Neil Tennant', *Face to Face*. 19, Winter 2006. National Portrait Gallery. <http://www.npg.org.uk/support/individual/face-to-face/my-favourite-portrait/my-favourite-portrait-by-neil-tennant.php> accessed 2.10.16
- ^{xxi} He wrote this account up in August 1965 with a view to getting it published. A copy, along with a letter to Peggy Ramsay is in the Orton Archive, MS 237/2/12/1
- ^{xxii} Orton to Ramsay, 10 June 1966, Orton Archive MS 237/7/10/30
- ^{xxiii} See Shepherd 1989, Coppa 1999, Sinfield 2003 and Dorney 2007 for more details of the implications and consequences of Wolfenden.
- ^{xxiv} See Cole 2000 and Geoffrey Aquilina Ross 2011
- ^{xxv} See Shepherd, Sinfield, Van Leer as detailed in FN xi.



DRAWING OF JOE ORTON BY PATRICK PROCTOR

Figure



Figure



Figure



Figure



Gaol and a library are his recipe for fame

Harold Miskin



Playwright **JOE ORTON**, photographed outside his Rat in Noel Street, London, N.1.

WHEN Joe Orton was a grubby-faced school boy at a secondary modern school in Leicester, he looked just like any other football-mad youth.

Joe still looks much the same, leather jacket, shirt and slightly sadistic smile, but underneath there is a talent which has excited the London critics. Joe's play *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* is now running at the New Arts Theatre in London.

His recipe for success is an unusual one for people. "Gaol," says Joe, "and the Southfields library in Leicester have helped me to get this far."

★ Time to think

"It's no good saying that it was hard work. I went to gaol for six months, two years ago, for pinching, and it gave me some time to think—to turn over in my mind everything that I had been doing. Joe phoned me from a tele-

phone kiosk near his London flat.

"I can't afford a phone of my own. People think I'm trailing me in it but that's not true. I haven't made a penny yet out of this play," he said.

He went to Leicewood Lane School because he failed his 11 plus and spent a lot of his spare time in Southfields library, which is close to his parents' home on the Eyres Mansell estate.

★ First job

"My old man is a gardener but it's no good asking for his address. I won't give it because I don't want my folks bothered."

He comes home to Leicester, about once a year and stays for as long as he can.

"My first job was in Leicester—I was a labourer in one of the bigger knitwear factories—but I got the sack after a month or two and then it was just one job after the other."

"When I go to the Labour Exchange to ask for work—a question of necessity—they always seem to offer me a labouring job."

★ 'Real life stuff'

He obtained an insight "behind the scenes of the acting game" from a spell in the theatre world.

"I joined the Leicester Drama

Society in 1967 and took part in a Junior Theatre production. Then the Leicester education authorities sent me to RADA with a grant in my pocket.

"After I finished the course I did a bit of rep, but I soon got fed up to the teeth with acting and went back to labouring—real life stuff and all that."

Joe says that he writes "a few plays and things" before he was sent to gaol, but he does not think much of any of them.

"It was after I came out that the stuff began to get interesting. I have written two full plays—*Entertaining*

Mr. Sloane' and *The Stuffed Rat on the Stairs*, which has been accepted by the BBC."

★ Third Programme

This play will probably be heard on the Third Programme. Joe's reaction to his success as a playwright is typical of the man.

"It's better than carting round great loads of bricks in London or sweeping up the cutting room floor in some Leicester factory", he says.

—Jack Gee

Figure

BK 2.

SHEET 3.

ORTON 2201(8)





Figure



Playwright Joe Orton yesterday . . . "Don't make me sound soppy," he said.

Daily Herald
May 13th '64

THEATRE'S NEW STAR SIGNS ON THE DOLE

By ANN PACEY

HE had just signed on at the Labour Exchange. He wears a leather jacket and open-neck shirt. He drank pink of stout, and said he could not afford to smoke.

Joe Orton is the man—a 34-year-old who wrote *Entertaining Mr. Sloane* and whose success still goes on to work. Joe is the playwright whose first production, *Entertaining Mr. Sloane*, had just opened at London's New Arts Theatre. The success of his play has attracted attention from the critics.

FARCE

He made it in a few days. He is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy.

Joe's idea is to get the 25-year-old into the theatre. He is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy.

He is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy.

TIME
"Joe Orton is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy. He is a man who has a lot of energy." The article continues with a discussion of Orton's work and the theatre scene.

THEATRE'S NEW STAR SIGNS ON THE DOLE

By ANN PACEY

HE had just signed on at the Labour Exchange. He wore a leather jacket and open-neck shirt. He drank pints of bitter and said he could not afford to smoke.

Joe Cronin is his name—a Labourer boy whose father is a gardener and whose mother also goes out to work.

Joe is the playwright whose first production, "Entertaining Mr. Brown," has just opened at London's New Arts Theatre in a storm of headlines from the columns and half-cuffed, half-laudatory comments from the critics.

FARCE

Here, most of us said, was a new talent. The new talent, having arranged his 42 two-week one and two-week runs from the Western State, returned his 1200 lbs in a taxi. The English here are all waving and the Billie is a good read.

Joe's looks suggest the 25 years mentioned to him in the theatre programme. He is actually 21, however, and had the year about giving marriage a second try.

Having failed his 11-plus, Joe wandered through secondary modern school and entered the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art because he thought he might make an actor.

In 1958 he got six months for larceny.

He seems not at all embarrassed by his work in the dock. He spent most of his spare time reading A. J. Cronin and wondering on the hypocrisy of his letter into.

Daily Herald
May 15th '66

TIME

"How do you like your musical job—and I need plenty of time to write," he said.

His first piece, "A Russian on the Beach," has been accepted by the BBC Third Programme, but not yet presented. He is working on a full-length play and a short one.

He appears pleasant but not over-enthused by the reception given in "Entertaining Mr. Brown."

Joe thought it was time to go. "Don't make the same supper," he said as he left.

There was hardly the first word of the play yet.

Playwright Joe Cronin yesterday. "Don't make the same supper," he said.



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