

# The Queer Future of Masculinity: Fathers and Sons in *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* and *A Number* by Caryl Churchill

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DOI: 10.26379/1546

## Abstract

Science fiction is rarely considered as a genre suitable for theatre: new worlds and spectacular scenarios seem oversized for the constraints of the performing space, which is often limited by matters of budget and casting. However, a significant tradition in contemporary theatre explores the relational and intimate elements of science fiction, where gendered identities are a central issue. Caryl Churchill's *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* (1971) and *A Number* (2002) use traditional science fiction *topoi*, such as ecological disaster and human cloning, as a framework to explore traditional family ties, and especially the father-son relationship. The "cognitive estrangement" triggered by the SF scenario makes familiar relationships uncanny in the Freudian sense of both strange and familiar: in this way, both plays stage the de-subjectification and 'queering' of the sons, substantiating science fiction's ability to unravel traditionally gendered subjectivities even in the smaller scale and domestic setting of theatrical performance.