

Gregory's girl essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Bill Forsyth's play, 'Gregory's Girl,' was a popular film during the 1980's. I expect this was due to the honest and real humour that the audience could relate to. I intend to explore and analyse the factors which made the film so popular, which include processes such as role reversal, the character building, the use of technology and the humour involved.

The first scene of the play displays the typical activities of a group of adolescent boys (i. e. spying on the nurses home). Nothing unusual there then. However, the boys do get slightly flustered and over-excited at what they see and have to leave.

I... I...

I can't breathe. " Two more boys appear, much younger than the first group of boys, and they are extremely composed. " A lot of fuss over a bit of tit, eh? " This is the first role reversal of the play, the younger boys seemingly far more mature than the older boys. There are many age based reversals strewn throughout the play, i. e. Gregory receiving ' dating advice' from his younger sister, and the teachers seeming as immature as some of the children (one teacher, Miss Welch, stops her class to have a conversation with the window cleaner for example).

Other role reversals included are gender based, where we see traditionally male subjects being dominated by girls (P. E, science), i. e. ' None of the boys can match Dorothy's skill' in football, and traditional female subjects such as cooking being far better performed by the boys, " Steve, can you help me with this pastry mix thing? " The cultural and social context of the play is definitely set in the time it was written, the 1980's, when sex

stereotyping was just beginning to ease out of its centuries old mould. A decade or so before, a girl in a football shirt (Dorothy) would not have been seen as it was in the 80's.

The girls in the play are all far more in control, dominating the central male as we see in scenes 59 through to 66. Three girls of the cast all easily string along Gregory until they have him where they want him, with Susan. " Look, I'm not sure what's going on. Is there some kind of joke? All this, with Carol and Margo and..

. it's a joke isn't it? " In virtually all pre-20th century plays this concept would never have been thought of. In Shakespeare, the ' Merchant of Venice' springs to mind, as we have examples of arranged marriages and the handing over of a woman's money to her husband. However, this play is comparable to ' Gregory's Girl' in such that the women of the play are portrayed as intelligent, outwitting even their own husbands and the crafty Jew to save a friend.

Early signs perhaps that the writer was thinking that women were not just there to be looked at, they were capable of anything a man could do, i. e. Dorothy being good at football, and a man being capable of doing women's jobs, e. g. Steve being an adept cook.

Prominent features of modern technology are all used, showcased even, in scene 9, in which we see Gregory demonstrating his prowess at using all modern things, i. . electric toothbrush, coffee machine. This expertise at modern technology emphasises how Gregory can grasp all the complications of modern technology, yet not the simple psychics on how he should charm a

girl, or dress for a date, which would be the case for many members of the audience at the time. Blatant statements occur several times in the play, which all point to the overall ' modernness' of the play. ' It's modern, Andy, it's good.

Modern girls, modern boys. It's tremendous. ' A sneaky opinion of his own play perhaps by Forsyth. The role-reversals of the play are exactly what the humour of the play is. Even though a role-reversal, they could be easily true in many cases, which the audience could easily relate to. Scene 36 in particular amused me, as did many of the age-based reversals of the play, in which we see the older and supposedly ' wiser' Gregory advising the younger, more polite Richard to ' Act your [Richard] age, go break some windows, demolish some phone boxes.

' Another amusing observation we see from Gregory arrives only a scene earlier, when Gregory declares that his pal Steven, the cook, that he is ' unnatural,' and a ' freak'. This observation may have been placed by Forsyth just to remind the audience that Steven was unusual in his hobbies, especially at that time. There are also several witty placements in the play where we see a slight hint of Forsyth mocking the use of certain things, for example in scene 46, in the boys toilets, they are used more as a congregation area for the male populace, which is more of a female activity in the first place, but also as a shop for Steven the cook to sell his food. The toilets are clean, ' pristine' as described by the writer.

Every person in the audience knew that no toilets in a Scottish secondary school near a council estate would have been ' pristine' but so is the case in

this. Despite being a modern play, ' Gregory's Girl' still retains many classic themes, such as romance, young love and parental authority, that have been frequently if not always used throughout history. In Shakespeare, he had the peasants speaking in prose, but the rich talked with poetry, it is similar here as we have no ' rich' but plenty of ' peasant's', whom all speak in a Scottish slang dialect. The reason's for this use of language is because of TV.

Much of the audience would have been undoubtedly brought up on a rich diet of day time soaps and drama's, which all include characters speaking in a local dialect. If the actors in Gregory's Girl had all been speaking in upper-class English, then it would not have been believable, and probably would have failed to extract much of the honest and real humour in the play. On the other hand, in Shakespeare's day, the audience of his play's may not have had as much knowledge of all the different accents and dialects of different people from different places and countries (i. . many of Shakespeare's plays are set in Italy. They speak in blatant English, and would have had an undoubtedly English accent), but at the time, it didn't matter so much.

To be honest, I can see why this play would have been such a hit in the 1980's, but I very much doubt it still retains the appeal to the audiences of today in their teens. The reason for this I would very much gather is that the younger generation of today fail to realise the ironies of the play as there are none, because the mould of sexual stereotyping has been entirely ripped open. I expect this was why I found the age-based reversals far more amusing. Despite this, there are still many quirks which helps it to retain its appeal, because still many home truths lurk inside this play, but they are just

a lot more obvious in today's society than they were. The play helped the audiences of the 1980's carefully explore the possibility that roles are interchangeable, and have no set points.

Now these observations are obvious, and don't have as much significance to today's audience. I have to say that the characters of the play, especially the clumsiness of the boys are frankly endearing, and the control and boldness of the girls is quite amusing, although it no longer holds the refreshing glance that it undoubtedly had at the time. Despite this, it still has a very insightful and witty script, that will probably remind us of not only how this country was, but also the kinds of dilemma's such as young love that will still be prominent in every persons lives for years to come.