

SYNOPSIS OF GIFT OF FORGOTTEN TONGUES

(a comic drama in one act; fifteen scenes)

TIME: the past and present of the possible future

PLACE: Cambridge, Massachusetts

SETTING: Cambridge, Massachusetts. A stylized set serves as the Pathway Detoxification Clinic and Felix Millmore's distorted memory of five locations: his home, an office, a laboratory, hospital, and underground research station

CHARACTERS: 3 women; 2 men

FELIX MILLMORE, a college professor; early forties

FERNELLE MILLMORE, his linguist savant daughter; sixteen

DOCTOR LOUISE WEAVER, a research geneticist; mid-thirties

CELIA LABERINTO, a mutagenically evolved female; eighteen

CLAUDE MAZEUR, a mutagenically evolved male; twenty

PLOT SYNOPSIS: Fernelle Millmore, a teenage linguist savant, is hired by a research geneticist to translate the arcane speech of two patients, a young man and woman undergoing an evolutionary metamorphosis, the shocking result of an experiment gone awry. The play is told from the viewpoint of the linguist's father, Felix, who believes the evolved patients (referred to as "mutagens") hold the visionary key to the future of humankind. Felix encourages his daughter to befriend the mutagens in order to fathom their facility with languages and discover any life enhancing revelations they have to offer. Felix's hope lies in the possibility that the mutagens will track endangered languages as well as create a universal one, but suddenly they dispense with language altogether, emitting strange musical sounds that cannot be deciphered. At first Fernelle resists the mutagens, finding them physically repulsive, but soon she becomes intrigued, and her subsequent attachment incites her father's jealousy and resentment, forcing him to confront his own inner turmoil. Eventually, the mutagens demand the isolation of an underground research station to continue their evolution. Fernelle agrees to accompany them, causing reactions in her father that jeopardize their relationship and his own humanity.

THEMATIC SYNOPSIS: The play explores the notion that language is humanity's ultimate triumph as well as its failure since it often betrays us as a reliable means of communication. Although the mutagens were conceived to exist in reality, they might be construed as an extended metaphor for the fusion of identities that occurs in unstable families, and the struggle between creatureliness and spirituality. *Gift of Forgotten Tongues* could also be interpreted as a dream play, in which Felix seeks a new theology in which the mutagens promise redemption through an absolute idiom, a global language with a divine syntax of understanding.

