

Chapter 5: Time Out, Space Beyond and the Other Body: Queer Presence in *Twelfth Night*

The homoerotics of Shakespearean comedy are most accurately perceived as a cultural intervention in a heterosexually overdetermined field.

(Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*, 1992)

Introduction

If there is a dramatic text which illustrates the need to analyse gender and sexuality as inextricably linked but also separate fields of enquiry, that text is *Twelfth Night*. Readings of the relationship between Viola/Cesario and Orsino, for instance, or Viola/Cesario and Olivia depend to a very great extent on how the character's gender is read. Normative readings emphasise the 'real' Viola underneath in the first case, and her performance as Cesario in the second. As Valerie Traub points out, the fact that Viola/Cesario's "If I did love you in my master's flame" speech to Olivia (I, V, 219) ¹ is treated as a "suspect performance" while the later "My father had a daughter loved a man" speech to Orsino (II, IV, 103) is seen as an expression of truth reveals the "assumption of universal heterosexuality" that informs such readings. ² Similarly, normative readings of the "love" between Antonio and Sebastian as friendship rather than homoerotic affection erect a boundary between 'proper' and 'improper' expressions of affection between men, Queer

¹ William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Elizabeth Story Donno (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. First published 1985). All subsequent references are to this edition.

² Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), p.131.

readings on the other hand, celebrate the gender indeterminacy of Viola as Cesario and the transgressive possibilities in terms of sexual attraction that this indeterminacy promotes. They posit a continuum between the homosocial and the homosexual whose visibility, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, has been “radically disrupted” in our society.³ Nevertheless, even when Viola/Cesario’s gender is fixed as indeterminate, this is not the only feature of either Olivia or Orsino’s interest in them, for there are questions of sexual desire which are not reducible to gender. Orsino’s attraction to the character, although referenced to gender, also exhibits a fondness for the physical characteristics of youth. This is something which, along with a concern about parentage, also arouses Olivia’s curiosity. Moreover, questions are prompted by sexual attraction where recourse to gender might represent a facile answer to a more complex question. The fact that it is only Antonio who voices his “love”, for example, while Sebastian does not, has been read in terms of equations between masculine/active and feminine/passive. Such equations simplify much of what actually takes place between the two. For these reasons, it is important to attribute a certain degree of autonomy to the workings of sexual desire in the play so that they are not discussed exclusively with reference to gender.

This chapter focuses upon what Marjorie Garber has labelled the “shadow stories” in *Twelfth Night*. These are the sexually transgressive desires of Olivia and Orsino for Viola/Cesario, and of Antonio for Sebastian. The chapter explores how these queer desires are made to signify onstage, as well as their relationship to the staging of sexual norms. In this respect, *Twelfth Night* is an intriguing text to look at in performance because it does not posit normative and queer desires as uniquely counterpoised, but also

³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: Homosocial Desire in English Literature*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 2-3.

as part of the same affective continuum. Productions make important choices, with significant consequences, as to whether to privilege sexually normative representations of desire, or queer desires or even to maintain a deliberate ambiguity in performance. Such choices are not made in a vacuum and are conditioned by historical, political and cultural circumstances. It is only more recently, for instance, that Antonio's relationship with Sebastian has been discussed in terms of a homoerotic emotional attachment rather than a friend's devotion. This move is linked to the growth of a body of lesbian and gay criticism which illustrated how the canonical status of Shakespeare had militated against homoerotic interpretation.⁴ The "shadow stories" are also differentially enabled by the dramatic text. While there is a textual language of "love" between Antonio and Sebastian, for instance, Olivia's declarations of passion to Viola/Cesario are consistently deflected or undermined. Nevertheless, productions that belong to the same time period make very different choices about the staging of desire in *Twelfth Night* and this can give a sense of the performative possibilities envisaged by a variety of theatre practitioners in a specific time period.

It is the chapter's contention that queer analysis most effectively explores these shadow stories and their onstage representation. Historically, lesbian and gay criticism arose to challenge the notion of a blindingly heterosexual canon, from which homosexual and lesbian desire were absent. Queer analysis, on the other hand, more often deals not with the absence of the non-normative from representation, but with a kind of presence.

⁴ See for instance, Simon Shepherd's hilarious "Shakespeare's Private Drawer: Shakespeare and Homosexuality" in Graham Holderness (ed.), *The Shakespeare Myth*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 96-113, as well as Alan Bray's *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982) and Bruce R. Smith's *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991).

In this respect, queer theory has itself been brought forth as a theory of sexuality by new and different conditions of representation. These include, most notably, the appropriation of queer desires by the mainstream. Yet the anti-assimilationist bent of queer theory also suggests that it is not enough simply to include queer presence alongside representations of the sexually normative. This merely adds certain newly-preferred sexual options to the list of the legitimate without challenging the process by which such desires are constructed as legitimate or illegitimate in the first place. Queer theory offers an alternative to this in its focus on what Jonathan Dollimore has labelled “the terrifying *mutability* of desire” which rapidly and totally overwhelms categories of sexual identity.⁵ This foregrounds what can still be an explosive charge in the notion that heterosexual and homosexual desire might inhabit the same onstage body.

The chapter focuses upon three mainstream productions of *Twelfth Night* and the ways in which they evoked queer presence. Two of these were theatre productions and one was made for television. The first section of the chapter surveys existing definitions of queer theatre in order to clarify how the productions in the chapter might be said to be queer-inflected. The next section analyses the validity of such definitions for the Portuguese context. In the subsequent analysis of the three productions, I make use of a queer model for the construction of sexual identity which has been put forward by Bruce R. Smith. Smith rejects binary or continuum models of sexual identity. Instead, he proposes a model of “lust in action” which is described as “a culture-specific configuration of time, place and body: time *out*, place *beyond*, body *below*, *around*, *on*,

⁵ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sex, Literature and Censorship*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 56.

from, within, without".⁶ This site-specific model moves discussion away from sexual identity as an individual, atemporal attribute of an individual towards a notion of sexual identity as relational and contingent. It also suggests that *all* sexual identities are constructed to some extent outside the norm. However, although the evocation of a time *out*, a place *beyond* and an/*other* body is indeed linked with desire *per se* in the configurations of "lust in action" discussed in this chapter, it is particularly linked with the representation of queer desires. This, for me, made it an appropriate model to use in the analysis of the representation of the shadow stories in productions of *Twelfth Night*.

I. Defining Queer Theatre

A first point to make concerns the imprecision with which the term 'queer' has been deployed in relation to theatre. This mirrors something of the historical transformation that the word has undergone from a marker of abjection to a reclaimed symbol of postmodern pride. Yet it also reflects certain unresolved theoretical questions around the use of the term. There is a tension between the use of queer to describe an identity, where it is often made synonymous for the lesbian and gay, and its deployment as a more general marker for the anti-normative, where it is restricted neither to the lesbian and gay nor to identity formations. Moreover, the question of how 'queer' as a marker for sexual identity relates to specific theatrical practices that can be labelled 'queer' has not been explored in depth. Annamarie Jagose defines queer as "those gestures or analytic models

⁶ Bruce R. Smith, "L(o)cating the Sexual Subject" in Terence Hawkes (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares vol. 2*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 110.

which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire”.⁷ This analytic model takes an analysis of queer beyond the explicitly lesbian and gay to a wider analysis of incoherencies in the construction of sexual identities, but how does this relate to theatrical representation? Definitions of queer theatre have tended to base themselves on the presence of lesbian and gay characters in the drama or its inclusion of lesbian and gay content. This not only tends to contradict queer’s promise as a *destabiliser* of sexual identity categories, but also pays little attention to the specifically theatrical as opposed to the textual.

Stefan Brecht’s *Queer Theatre* is a personal account of 1960’s and 1970’s fringe theatre in New York, which reviews the work of Charles Ludlam and The Theatre of the Ridiculous among others. Brecht describes this queer theatre as “derisive low comedy and burlesque”, yet “upholding the aesthetic ideal” and then details what he sees as some of its other defining paradoxes:

Its sense of tragedy, tho (*sic*) perhaps arising from self pity, is a touching inconsistency; its devotion to truth, tho perhaps an expression of anger, an arbitrary admirable choice; its love of beauty, tho perhaps rooted in despairing vanity, a heroic paradox. This inconsistency, choice and paradox make it queer.⁸

Yet if Brecht refers here to fringe theatre work, queer theatre has led something of a double life in the sense that it has also consistently been present within the theatrical mainstream. Indeed, Neil Bartlett, Artistic Director of the Lyric Theatre in London, has argued that there would be no mainstream theatre in England without queers:

⁷ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory*, (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), p. 3.

⁸ Stefan Brecht, *Queer Theatre*, (London & New York: Methuen, 1986. First published by Suhrkamp Verlag Frankfurt am Main, 1978), p. 9.

If you remove Wilde, Rattigan, Maugham, Coward, Osborne, Orton, and Novello from the post-1900 British theatre profession – from the money-earning profession of theatre – you’re left with a pretty serious problem at the box office.⁹

Alan Sinfield’s *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century* analyses both mainstream and fringe queer theatre in England and North America. He includes chapters on Wilde, Tennessee Williams and Noel Coward together with chapters on work produced by Gay Sweatshop and the more recent work of queer writers and performers like Neil Bartlett or Split Britches. Sinfield provides an excellent overview of lesbian and gay dramatic writing in the century as well as discussing in detail representations of queerness in drama not written by lesbians or gay men. In his introduction, he rejects a definition of queer theatre as exclusively lesbian and gay-themed theatre:

It is indeed central to my argument that *theatre generally* has been shot through with images and practices of queerness.¹⁰ (author’s emphasis)

Sinfield also argues that theatre has provided something of a privileged enclave for queerness in English and North American theatre, even if that privilege has also had its costs:

An element of queerness, so long as it is kept more or less out of sight, has been a price that society pays to have theatre as we have known it.

⁹ Alan Sinfield, “The Moment of Submission: Neil Bartlett in Conversation” in *Modern Drama*, 39 (1996), p. 215.

¹⁰ Alan Sinfield, *Out on the Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 4.

For sexual dissidents, the price has been a tacit admission that we are by definition indecent and that a degree of discretion is only proper.¹¹

Sinfeld's use of queer emphasises a continuity between more explicit contemporary queer work and the oblique representations of homosexuality of Rattigan and Coward. Yet the usage of the term queer from the 1990's onwards has more often stressed its difference from earlier homosexual representations and from the lesbian and gay work of the 1970's and 1980's. John M. Clum, for instance, counterposes Terence McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (1994) which he describes as a "gay" play, to Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1992/4) which he describes as a "queer" play. For Clum, queer "has more complex, more politically charged connotations: a revelling in difference, a belief in performativity over stable essence, a celebration of marginality".¹² Equally, whereas MacNally's play tends to concentrate on its gay characters with little reference to the heterosexual world, Kushner's characters cannot escape it if they want access to medical care and if their sexual partners, like the lawyer Roy M. Cohn, are passing as heterosexual in the outside world.

Clum also suggests that certain performance styles are more often linked with queer theatre, particularly those associated with anti-illusionist performance:

Our best playwrights have always seen realism as a trap – or *the least theatrical of the modes of dramatic representation* and the one on which the values of mainstream society are most indelibly inscribed. (my emphasis)¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 12.

¹² John M. Clum, *Still Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama*, (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000. 2nd ed. First published in 1992 by Columbia University Press), p.263.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

Angels in America, with its inclusion of angels, choirs and speaking Mormon dummies is an obvious example of this tendency to eschew illusionist performance. Similarly, the playwright Phyllis Nagy describes the setting of her 1995 play *The Strip* as “(a) fluid, non-naturalistic landscape dominated by an enormous three-dimensional re-creation of Sphinx and pyramid which represents the exterior of the Luxor hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada. It never leaves the stage”.¹⁴

Brian Roberts identifies a common stress on theatricality in the theatre work of contemporary English queer playwrights Neil Bartlett, Jonathan Harvey and Mark Ravenhill. In the work of Bartlett, he sees this theatricality as “literal as well as a metaphor of performed identity”.¹⁵ This suggests how dramatic notions of queer content and character might be linked with notions of specifically queer performance styles. Roberts argues that while mainstream theatre refers often to the language of theatre, it very rarely talks about theatricality. Bartlett’s staging of his plays, on the other hand, flaunts their theatricality in its mixture of high and low theatrical *genres* and self-conscious framing of theatrical costume, set and performance. Within this deliberate focus on the performative, theatricality as a metaphor for performed identity emphasises the temporary, improvisational nature of gender and sexual roles. The figure of the worldly-wise, damaged but witty drag queen, for example, appears in work by Harvey, Bartlett and Nagy. Nina Rappi, in an essay on lesbian theatre, also argues that such theatre is characterised less about work done by and for the transhistorical, essential lesbian than a deconstruction of the notion of sexual identity itself. For Rappi, this

¹⁴ Phyllis Nagy, *Plays I*, (London: Methuen, 1998), p. 182.

¹⁵ Brian Roberts, “Whatever Happened to Gay Theatre?” in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 62 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 184.

involves:

an interplay between subject (desiring) and object (desired). These two positions are interchangeable, reversible – playfully occupied or abandoned at will, both within the sexual arena and outside it.¹⁶

Examples of this might include Holly Hughes' creative reworking of butch-femme roles in *Dress Suits for Hire* (1987) or Phyllis Nagy's complex representation of dependency in a lesbian relationship in *Weldon Rising* (1992).

Increasingly desperate for something to enliven its productions, contemporary mainstream theatre has seized upon the suggestion of queerness as part of what Chuck Kleinhans has labelled its "cannibalization of sub-cultures".¹⁷ Yet these mainstream representations of queerness tend to remain within clear limits. This chapter is keen to explore where those limits might currently be. It also, however, emphasises the distance between these inclusions of the *non*-normative and the *anti*-normative potential of queer theatre. Central to this is an insistence on the destabilising potential of queer representation.

¹⁶ Nina Rappi, "That's Why You are so Queer: The Representation of Lesbian Sexuality in the Theatre" in Liz Gibbs (ed.) *Daring to Dissent: Lesbian Culture from Margin to Mainstream*, (London & New York: Cassell, 1994), p.5.

¹⁷ Chuck Kleinhans, "Taking out the Trash: Camp and the Politics of Parody" in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 187.

II. Queer Theatre in Portugal

As Alan Sinfield correctly observes, while there are common features that unite English and North American theatre, “(t)he great traditions of continental Europe, on the other hand, strike me as genuinely separate”.¹⁸ In Portugal, for example, it could be said that the theatrical mainstream is too precarious to be really mainstream and the fringe thus even more fringe. The relationship between them is one of more obvious separation, and rarely does fringe theatre work transfer into the mainstream. Portugal has never had a body of self-styled lesbian and gay theatre work and, therefore, there is no sense of queer functioning as a reaction to that lesbian and gay theatre work. Yet there are some similarities between the two traditions in relation to queer representation. In Portugal, too, the covert contribution of gay men in particular has been significant. Theatre has functioned as a creative home for queers, but one which has nevertheless also required a continuing public silence about their sexual orientation for high-profile theatre work. At the present moment, for example, no mainstream Portuguese theatre practitioner refers to their work as being queer or lesbian or gay. No Portuguese theatre critic uses queer as a category of analysis and there is rarely any focus on the role of the body or sexuality in reviews of performance. Yet this should not lead to a conclusion of queer absence. There are current theatrical projects which could usefully be described as queer and queer analysis could productively promote discussion of the representation of sexuality in a variety of contemporary Portuguese theatre productions.

However, Portuguese queer theatre analysis is also likely to have important

¹⁸ Alan Sinfield, (1999), *Op. Cit.* p. 5.

differences from Anglo-American models. John M. Clum summarises the history of the representation of homosexual desire on the North American stage as “a series of moves from nothing, to innuendo and gesture, to discussion without any physical signs of attraction or affection, to, finally, showing”.¹⁹ However, queer theatrical representations in Portugal do not fall neatly into such a progress narrative, for they have remained sporadic and intermittent rather than gaining a long-term place within theatrical practice. Moreover, because of the late arrival of representations of alternative forms of sexuality in Portuguese theatre, contemporary representations of queerness are as likely to combine Clum’s historical features of the representation of homosexual desire synchronically as diachronically. It is quite possible, for instance that “innuendo and gesture” and “explicit showing” co-exist even in the same production. This is particularly true of mainstream theatre productions which remain unsure about whether queerness will attract their audiences or alienate them. Therefore, rather than the type of linear progress narrative outlined by Clum, Portuguese queer representations are more likely to be characterised by what Miguel Vale de Almeida has referred to as “conceptual and strategic *bricolage*”, both in terms of the mixture of influences that constitute queer representation and in terms of the forms these representations themselves take within theatre. Such *bricolage*, for Vale de Almeida, is enabled by “the Portuguese situation of semi-periphery and structural backwardness”, thus “transforming a disadvantageous situation into an advantageous one”.²⁰

¹⁹ John M. Clum (2000), *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

²⁰ “(um) bricolage conceptual e estratégico que a situação portuguesa de semi-periferia e atraso estrutural permitem (transformando, assim, esta situação de desvantagem numa vantagem)”. Miguel Vale de Almeida, “A teoria *queer* e a contestação da categoria ‘género’ ” in Fernando Cascais (ed.), *Indisciplinar a Teoria: Estudos Gays, Lésbicos e Queer* (Lisboa: Fenda, 2004), p. 97.

One more obvious form of queer theatre in Portugal is the staging of Anglo-American queer plays, such as Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* and Mark Ravenhill's *Shopping and F***ing*. Evidently, there is a certain ambiguity in this process. It does enable theatre practitioners in Portuguese theatre to become involved in explicitly queer work without running the risk of a more public exposure. However, although often performed by Portuguese companies, it is precisely their 'foreignness' that makes them performable in Portugal. Their queerness thus becomes acceptable as part of this 'foreignness'. Such plays are also a marginal part of the foreign plays that are staged in Portugal each year and only reach the stage once they have been successful abroad. They act to shore up a view that queer theatre is only found outside Portugal and implicitly suggest that Anglo-American queer theatre is *the model* to follow. Moreover, translation and adaptation of these plays is not a value-free process, and the ways in which they are rendered 'suitable' for the Portuguese stage are often subject to the same mechanisms of self-censorship that apply to Portuguese theatrical production in general.²¹

Another area of queer theatre in Portugal is that of drag performances. Vale de Almeida calls drag "the iconic expression of the queer attitude itself" and performances have a long history in Portugal and continue to attract reasonably-sized, mixed audiences.²² Carlos Porto refers to two productions from the 1980's which included figures in drag; *A Dança das Bruxas (The Dance of the Witches)* performed at the Finalmente club in 1981, and *Memórias de uma Mulher Fatal (Memoirs of a Femme Fatale)* in the Sala

²¹ This could be seen, for example, in the Teatro Aberto production of *A Minha Noite com o Gil (My Night with Reg)* where more overt suggestions of physical desire as well as effeminacy were greatly contained.

²² Vale de Almeida, *Op. Cit.*, p. 96.

Manuela Porto in 1982.²³ Male-female drag performances are currently the staple diet of bar/club lesbian and gay entertainment in Lisbon and Porto and of Gay Pride celebrations. There are a great range of drag performances, some of which are amateur, some of which are uncritical or misogynistic or both, some of which are subtle and carefully worked, like those of Gonçalo Ferreira de Almeida or gloriously satirical like those produced at Comuna's café concerts. The figure of the transvestite has also been the subject of academic analysis. Eugénia Vasques and the Maria Matos theatre in Lisbon brought together contributions from a Conference held at the theatre to discuss the role of the transvestite in the work of the actor on a CR-Rom.²⁴ Drag also plays a central role in recent Portuguese queer theatre writing. André Murraças' *O Espelho do Narciso Gordo* (2003), for instance, is structured around male actors playing female roles as well as actresses playing male characters.

A third area of queer theatre work is that of the director Ricardo Pais at the Teatro Nacional São João. Two features of Pais' work as a director link in well with a queer project. The first is his emphasis on the importance of theatrical form *per se* and his (re)creation of the dramatic text anew through performance. In the gaps that are opened up between text and performance, moral judgements of events and characters are made secondary to theatrical ones, where the normative and the non-normative are potentially on equal ground. The second is Pais' repeated and deliberate attempt to draw attention to the mechanisms of theatrical artifice. Such a concern is anti-realist in orientation and

²³ Carlos Porto & Salvato Teles de Menezes, *10 Anos de Teatro e Cinema em Portugal*, (Lisboa: Caminho, 1985), pp. 93, 103. Porto also refers to a 1982 revue piece about homosexuality called "Blue Jeans," which was reputed to have "shocking scenes" in it. Porto adds laconically that the only thing shocking about it was how bad it was. p.120.

²⁴ Eugénia Vasques, *As Fronteiras do Travesti no Trabalho do Actor*, (Lisboa: Teatro Municipal Maria Matos, 2001).

privileges a view of sexual identity as representationally rather than naturalistically constructed. There is a similarity with the work of Neil Bartlett in this respect, which also extends to Pais's interest in mixing different theatrical *genres*. Pais's work is less explicitly or sustainedly queer than Bartlett's, but it is as disruptive of notions of sexual identity in its own way. Moreover, the mixing of high and low theatrical *genres*, especially within the context of a national theatre, is particularly rare in the more stratified world of Portuguese theatre. Pais has also pioneered the increased collaboration of translators and dramaturgs within the theatrical process and the negotiations between actors, director, translators and academics are another area which, I would argue, often significantly queer his productions.

III. *Noite de Reis* at the Teatro Nacional São João (1998)

In a “fabricated” interview published in the *Noite de Reis* programme, Pais characterises Viola as “libido on the loose” and as being responsible for provoking “aberrant passions”. The “web of desire” that is woven round her is based on the improbability of the absolute similarity of the two twins, which for Pais “illuminates in a very particular way the ambiguity of desire”. Moreover, the fact that none of the three marriages actually takes place on stage is seen by him as a positive advantage for a production and he sees the marriages themselves as evidence of social, rather than natural, processes at work:

At heart, what is created in the play is not a mechanism for the resolution of desires, but a mechanism for the substitution or

sublimation of them within the regime of Olivia and Orsino's new fidelities, which the matrimonial bond will legitimate.²⁵

Similarly, interviews with the Press around the time of the production indicated that the issues he had wanted to explore in the play included questions of gender and sexuality. Pais located the play historically “in the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, which takes on very particular forms when we are talking about beauty”.²⁶ This focus on beauty and its eventual passing was one of the attractions of the play for Pais. Admitting to finding himself “at a particularly libertine moment” in his career, the comedies enabled him to explore connections between the search for beauty and other forms of struggle against death:

I've always had a particular attraction to the comedies and those I've done have dealt with reproduction, the survival instinct, heredity as a guarantee of survival, and looking for beauty which no longer exists. All of these are reflections on our struggle against death.²⁷

In the same interview, Pais made an explicit connection between his staging of the play and sexual transgression. In response to a question about the significance of the semi-circular objects that defined the various settings onstage, Pais replied:

²⁵ “No fundo, o que se constrói nesta peça não é um sistema de resolução dos desejos, mas de substituição ou sublimação destes num regime de novas fidelidades de Olívia e Orsino, que o laço matrimonial virá legitimar”. “A Propósito de *Noite de Reis*: Entrevista Fabricada por Rodrigo Affreixo e Ricardo Pais” in Programme for *Noite de Reis ou como lhe queiram chamar* (Porto: Teatro Nacional São João, 1998). p.5. No page numbers exist in the article so I have added them myself.

²⁶ Marcos Cruz, “Desafio Idonho” in *O Diário de Notícias* (15/10/98), p. 50.

²⁷ “Tenho tido uma atracção relativa por comédias e as que fiz andavam à volta da reprodução, da necessidade de sobreviver, de encontrar na hereditariedade um vínculo de sobrevivência, de procurar beleza que já não se atinge – tudo reflexões sobre este percurso de luta contra a morte”. Oscar Faria, “Comédia de Enganos” in *O Público* (15/10/98), p. 31.

The metaphors enabled by this object are multiple. We are reminded of the theses about Shakespeare's homosexuality, as well as Bowie's androgyny or the various kinds of cross-dressing in *Twelfth Night*.²⁸

This suggests that the staging extended the dramatic text's focus on the multiplicity and diversity of sexual identity. Yet this apparent embrace of difference is qualified by Pais' surprising indignation at an interviewer's suggestion that Feste's "transvestite" performance in the play revealed "an almost camp aesthetic":

The transvestism of the Fool has nothing to do with camp! Just to imagine that either João (Reis, the actor who played Feste) or Micaela (Cardoso, the actress who played Viola) would give themselves up to a merely provocative stylistic exercise is not to understand the very essence of what we have been creating. It is an error (unfortunately a long-standing one) which my work leads many vulgar and rash commentators to make.²⁹

At the risk of appearing a "vulgar and rash commentator", this dismissal of a camp aesthetic merits further attention, as it would seem to establish limits to the production's flirtation with sexual difference. Jonathan Dollimore describes camp as "a form of transgressive reinscription, turning the artifice of theatre against what it represents, reconfiguring the natural as the most deeply inadequate of all ontologies – a pose without

²⁸ "As metáforas potenciadas por este objecto são múltiplas. Recordem-se as teses acerca da homossexualidade de Shakespeare; e reflecta-se igualmente sobre a androginia de Bowie ou sobre os diversos travestimentos que occorem em *Noite de Reis*". *Ibidem*. In an article in *O Público* (7/11/98), these objects are described as "lugar de todos os desejos e confusões" (the place of all desires and confusions), p. 72.

²⁹ "O *travesti* do Bobo não tem nada a ver com *camp*! Imaginar que o João ou a Micaela se entregassem a um mero exercício de estilo provocatório é desconhecer o coração mesmo do que temos vindo a construir. É um erro (infelizmente histórico) a que meu trabalho conduz muitos grosseiros e incautos opinadores!". Interview with Ricardo Pais printed in production Programme, *Op. Cit.* p.7.

style”.³⁰ This vision of a camp aesthetic would appear to be perfectly consistent with Pais’ own theatrical vision, so why is there such a concern to distinguish between the superficiality of “a merely provocative exercise in style” and the depth of “the very essence of what we have been creating” in order to distance the possibility of a camp reading? I would suggest that this anxiety about camp is simultaneously sexual and cultural. Pais’ negation of camp seems to stem from a sense that too close an association with a specifically queer representational style might jeopardise the status of the production in the public eye. The apparent message to the audience is that just because his production of Shakespeare is not a conventional one, and includes an explicit transvestite presence, this should not interfere with either the status of the production as publicly-funded Art or the presumption of compulsory heterosexuality that closes the play.

These concerns also inform his sense of the marriages as a form of sublimation of or substitution for “aberrant passions”. Such a notion may expose the social, rather than natural, foundations of marriage as an institution. Yet the way he presents it makes this transfer seem almost natural, as if these “new fidelities” simply replaced “aberrant passions” without any disruption being implied. Moreover, the focus on reproduction and heredity as, like the search for beauty, different forms of struggle against death, ignores the fact that the first two are very much tied up with compulsory heterosexuality while the search for beauty is not. Indeed, the threatening quality of beauty is precisely that it

³⁰ Jonathan Dollimore, “Shakespeare Understudies: the Sodomite, the Prostitute, the Transvestite and their Critics” in Jonathan Dollimore & Alan Sinfield (eds) *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd. ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 148. It should also be said, however, that the cultural transfer of a term such as camp from the Anglo-American to the Portuguese context makes it subject to reinterpretation. As such, Pais may have a very different understanding of exactly what constitutes camp.

fails to recognise a barrier between heterosexual and homosexual attraction. From this reading of Pais' public pronouncements, therefore, there is a sense that queer desires have an inclusive place within the production alongside normative desires. This enhances Pais' credibility as a (post)modern, European director of Shakespeare. However, the representation of queerness is also subject to certain limits, which dissociate it effectively from any association with specifically queer performance styles in case this endangers the status of the production.

Pais was not the only figure to stress the possibility of queer readings of the production. In an article which introduced the published translation and which was also printed in the production Programme, the translator António M. Feijó noted:

The sexuality of this allegorical Adriatic world is tired, and well-illustrated by the weary stoicism and less than happy intelligence of the Fool. The only character in whom desire circulates *furiously* is Antonio, in his homoerotic passion for Sebastian. (my emphasis)³¹

Even allowing for the fact that the Portuguese word “rábido” (furiously) is of Latin origin, and it is common for such words to sound more forceful than their English equivalents, it is still a strong adjective to describe Antonio's feelings for Sebastian, especially when contrasted with the “tired” sexuality of the other characters. The use of words like “desire” itself and “passion” would seem to emphasise that, on Antonio's part at least, this is sexual passion rather than friendship.

³¹ “A sexualidade deste mundo encaixado num Adriático alegórico é cansada, e bem exemplificada pelo estoicismo envelhecido pela inteligência nada alegre do bobo. A única personagem em que o desejo circula

Similarly, in the production Programme, there is an article on the play by the academic Paulo Eduardo Carvalho, with a section entitled ‘Impoluto Afecto’ (Unpolluted Affection). Carvalho has taken this title from Feijó’s Portuguese translation of the first scene between Antonio and Sebastian (II, I). In the Shakespearean text, Antonio’s lines run “therefore I shall crave of you your leave/ that I may bear my evils alone. It were a *bad recompense* for your love to lay any of them on you” (lines 4-5, my emphasis). In Feijó’s translation, they become “Por isso vos peço que me deixeis suportar sozinho o mal que me cabe em sorte. Mal paga seria para o vosso afecto por mim que vos *poluisse* a vós” (my emphasis).³² The translator’s unprompted choice of “pollution” here, with its simultaneous connotation of both physical and moral uncleanness, has been picked up by Carvalho and transformed specifically into *unpolluted* affection. Thus, a potentially negative connotation for homoerotic affection in the translation is transformed into a positive one within an academic piece on the various circulations of sexuality in the play. The section explicitly announces its intention to “give voice to a deliberately non-heterosexist reading” and surveys Anglo-American critical writings on sexuality in *Twelfth Night*.³³ Carvalho also discusses the implications of Olivia’s radical refusal to participate in the masculine marriage system on patriarchal terms and suggests that “the passion awoken by Cesario (Viola) in Olivia is perhaps one of the best opportunities provided by our theatrical conventions”, seeing as ‘the tongue, face, limbs, actions and spirit’ which seduce Olivia are now those of an actress”.³⁴ This comment illustrates not

rábido é António, na sua paixão homoerótica por Sebastião”. António M. Feijó, Preface to *Noite de Reis ou como lhe queiram chamar*, (Lisboa: Edições Cotovia, 1998), p. 11.

³² *Ibid*, p. 50.

³³ Paulo Eduardo Carvalho, “Impoluto Afecto” in Programme for *Noite de Reis Op. Cit.* pp. 6-8. Once more, I have added my own page numbers.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 7.

only how an earlier generation of Anglo-American queer critical writing has informed discussion of sexuality in this Portuguese production, but also a sense that the contemporary context of the production could provide new opportunities to stage specifically queer desires.

Taken as a whole, what these comments suggest is that there was something of a shared vision among the (all male) central figures involved in the production which included and sometimes foregrounded queer sexual desires.³⁵ Moreover, the way in which Carvalho transforms Feijó's use of "pollution" suggests a degree of interaction between these figures which helped to shape the production's representation of sexuality. Such interactions could act either to queer the production further or to set limits upon it. The example of Carvalho's transformation of Feijó's translation is an instance of the former, while Pais' marking of the parameters of Feste and Viola's performances is an instance of the latter.

III. I. Stage Fluency and Stylised Acting as Theatrical "Solvents of Morality"

On paper at least, the production thus presented impeccably queer credentials. Director, translator and academic advisor all stressed queer aspects of the play. The next three sections of this chapter examine how this emphasis was conveyed in performance. They analyse two key features of the production's staging of queer desires. One of these was the use of stage fluency and stylised acting to suspend moral judgements of the non-

³⁵ Nuno M. Cardoso also suggested that a focus on gender and sexual role-playing was privileged over other possible readings of the play, such as class relationships or its representation of Puritanism.

normative. The second was the creation of particular times, spaces and bodies linked with queer desires.

In “Notes on Camp”, Susan Sontag suggests that the privileged connection of homosexuality with camp taste acts as a “solvent of morality” which facilitates the integration of homosexuals into heterosexual society.³⁶ In other words, moral judgements of homosexual practices are made secondary to aesthetic ones in a process which elevates homosexuals into “aristocrats of taste”. In the TNSJ production, two particular production features acted as “solvents of morality” in the sense that they helped make moral judgements about queer desires secondary to theatrical ones. The first of these was the production’s stage fluency. A minimum of elements were used to suggest setting and there were only occasional props. The main elements of the setting, two semi-circular objects, could be wheeled on and off the stage rapidly, enabling scene changes to be quick and the general pace of the production to be rapid.³⁷ The prevailing impression created by this stage fluency was of a series of swift and often random encounters between the different characters. The ever-changing combinations of characters onstage broke down any sense of certain encounters being different in kind or more important than others. This, in turn, functioned to break down hierarchies between normative and non-normative encounters.

The second “solvent of morality” was the stylised form of acting used throughout the production. An advantage of not performing naturalistically is that conventional audience reactions to certain emotions and desires are not invoked during the

³⁶ Susan Sontag, “Notes on Camp,” in *A Susan Sontag Reader*, introduced by Elizabeth Hardwick (London: Penguin, 1983. First published in the USA by Farrar, Straus & Giroux inc., 1964.), p. 109.

³⁷ Micaela Cardoso called the movements of these objects onstage ‘almost ballet-like’. Personal interview with the actress (17/3/2004).

performance. This means that usual responses to signs of queer affection, which in other contexts might be negative, or at least different from their reaction to signs of heterosexual affection, are suspended. In the TNSJ production, the feeling of emotional intensity was conveyed instead by the languages of theatre itself, whether through visual *tableaux*, costume, movement, music and/or lighting. Audiences have become de-familiarised with such theatre languages, especially when they operate autonomously from the text, and this lack of immediate recognition of the signalling of queer desires enabled the construction of an onstage space of potential equality which bypassed conventional moral judgements of queerness.

III. II. The “Temps Autre” of Queer Desire

This wider performance context enabled normative and queer desires to be represented on a potentially non-hierarchical basis. Within such a context, the production also created specific moments of theatrical time which were linked with queer desires. The text itself suggests a thematic concern with time as a subjective experience. Although Pais emphasised the “inescapability and irreducibility of time” in *Twelfth Night*, characters in the drama do spend what seems to be a disproportionate amount of their time in sexual experimentation before the rather hastily arranged marriages.³⁸ At least one third of the fictional time is given over to the active pursuit of sexual experimentation, with another third given over to the build-up to these relationships at the beginning and then another to the ‘clarification’ of them through marriage. Yet it often seems that the bulk of the play’s

³⁸ From an interview with Daniel Guerra in *Correio da Manhã*, (1/11/98), unpaginated.

business concerns this middle time of sexual experimentation. The rhythm of the play text follows a pattern of slow-quick-slow, as the time of sexual experimentation quickens the character's consciousness of time passing. Yet despite Olivia's acknowledgement that "(t)he clock upbraids me with the waste of time" (III, I, 115), which awakens her into declaring her love for Viola/Cesario, she then proceeds to spend even more time in idle pursuit of her new passion. The play text also represents real time as radically unstable in the absence/presence of sexual desire. When Viola first appears as Cesario, it is made clear that the favours s/he has received from Orsino have overstepped the boundaries of propriety in terms of the speed with which they have been bestowed. Antonio is similarly dismayed when he thinks Sebastian has become "a twenty years' removed thing" (V, I, 78) in the blink of an eye.

In contrast to fictional time, Anne Ubersfeld defines theatrical time as "un temps autre", where the laws and norms of real time do not apply.³⁹ Within this imaginative world, productions can contract or extend fictional time and thus give more or less emphasis to different events of the drama. In the TNSJ production, the textual rhythm of slow-fast-slow was altered at significant moments so that it seemed that the lazier time of sexual experimentation might never give way to marriage.⁴⁰ The recurring use of Bowie's *Time*, with its refrain "(w)e should be on by now", ran through the production as a constant reminder that the 'duty' of the characters lay elsewhere. Yet, its repetition throughout the play also suggested that they continued to find the pleasure of experimentation greater than the call to (hetero)sexual duty.

³⁹ Anne Ubersfeld, *Lire le Théâtre II: L'École du Spectateur*, (Paris: Belin, 1996), p. 197.

⁴⁰ Micaela Cardoso herself noted that the speed with which the production moved towards its conclusion contrasted greatly with the slower rhythm of the rest of the production.

Ubersfeld also notes that each time a production highlights its own theatricality, there is an insistence on the “depth of fictional time”, so that a performance moment which emphasises its own theatricality can seem to be taking a great deal of time out of the ‘real’ time of performance even if it actually lasts for only a second or two.⁴¹ Extra-textual moments in the production illustrated how this insistence on theatricality and the “depth of fictional time” was linked with the staging of queer desires. After Olivia and Viola/Cesario’s first encounter, Viola delivered her speech on the sexual confusion engendered by her disguise alone on stage. However, as she reached the final part of the speech, Olivia walked slowly across the stage, now in a purple dress and jewels, carrying lit candelabra. Soft offstage piano music accompanied her as she approached a bird in a cage which she then took offstage with her. The synchronicity of these two moments encouraged a double-layered reading of the passions aroused by their first encounter. Viola’s textual ‘truth’, that she is ‘really’ a woman and therefore unable to love Olivia, was viewed against the specifically theatrical beauty of Olivia’s fantasy which made no reference to gender, only to the effect of the character’s presence. This onstage tension between the visual image and the voicing of the text suggested a conflict between Olivia’s desire for Viola/Cesario in a specifically queer, theatrical “temps autre” and Viola/Cesario’s normative, textual rejection of Olivia’s passion. Indeed, the image of the transformation wrought in Olivia by desire had the combination of intense beauty and underlying tragedy that Stefan Brecht attributes specifically to queer theatre.

⁴¹ Anne Ubersfeld, (1996), *Op. Cit.*, p. 204.

For Ubersfeld, “memory and utopia, desire and remembrance, all that conjures up an absence, is the terrain of theatrical pleasure”.⁴² One production moment which worked such terrain was the stage representation of Olivia and Viola/Cesario’s third encounter. The dramatic text does not focus explicitly on the meeting. From Olivia’s speeches, it can only be gathered that Cesario/Viola has confirmed his/her rejection of Olivia. The production created an extra-textual moment which suggested a ‘before’ to this encounter. Olivia lay across the front of the stage, a glass of red wine placed next to her. She dreamt of the meeting to come as ‘Time’ played in the background. As Olivia lay dreaming, Viola/Cesario passed behind the white gauze curtain at the back of the stage from left to right (see photograph no. 7 at the end of this chapter). After a few seconds, Sebastian passed behind the same curtain from right to left. This moment of pure theatricality once more held queer and normative desires in tension. The “temps autre” of Olivia’s *reverie* conflicted with the moving forward of fictional time, embodied in the appearance of Sebastian. This became, therefore, also a conflict between different forms of theatrical pleasure. While the fictional ending carries the audience forward to the pleasure of a festive resolution, the reminiscence of this queer “shadow story” created a pleasure which was purely theatrical and that prevented this move forward. These two forms of pleasure could only frustrate each other. The rush to end the fiction must leave behind the specifically queer theatrical pleasure of the “temps autre”, while this moment of queer pleasure can only delay the movement towards textual, heterosexual closure.

⁴² “(...) la mémoire et l’utopie, le désir et le souvenir, tout ce qui convoque une absence, voilà le terreau du plaisir théâtral”. *Ibid*, p.276. My translation from the French.

III. III. “The Metaphors Enabled by this Object are Multiple”: Creating “Spaces Beyond”

As mentioned previously, stage fluency enabled queer and normative desires to be staged in such a way that one was not privileged over the other. The staging of the play also disrupted the coherence of the stage space in a way that suggested multiple readings of sexual identity.⁴³ The TNSJ stage was divided into two levels by a step and the main stage could be further divided by the use of the white gauze curtain. Feste’s entrances from the audience transgressed the divide between audience and performance space and, in the performance video, Maria could be seen spying on Olivia’s encounter with Viola/Cesario from the wings offstage.

It is within this context of disruption of a coherent stage space that the two semi-circular objects assumed their theatrical significance (see photograph no. 8 at the end of this chapter). The brown one was used to signal Orsino’s court. The orange one signalled Olivia’s household. Yet a variety of other settings could be suggested by the same objects, either singly or in combination. Putting the two together could form a circle or an S-shape. The two objects might face each other in opposing lines as they did at the end of the play in Orsino’s ‘reformed’ court. Both objects included a seat inside which meant that the vertical space of the objects was opened up as much as the horizontal. Characters could sit on the various levels of the objects or even on top of them. The sense of their multiple uses was highlighted by the fact they remained onstage throughout so that the audience saw them being rolled into position as scenes changed. With the set in almost

⁴³ Joanne Tompkins suggests a connection between the literal and metaphoric uses of stage space in her comment that theatrical space “slips between both a literal location and a metaphoric capacity to structure our perceptions of the world”. C.f. “Space and the Geographies of the Theatre- An Introduction” in *Modern Drama* Vol. XLVI No. 4 Winter 2003, p. 538.

continual motion, and a disruption of the unity of the stage space, the production encouraged an equally multiple reading of the characters who moved in these spaces. As Pais stated in interview, their different permutations multiplied not only the settings but also sexual identity formations and this multiplicity included spaces for queer desires. While Feste performed, for instance, Orsino was sitting on top of the brown object with Viola/Cesario by his side. As their conversation developed, Orsino lay back and placed his head in Cesario/Viola's lap. This casual gesture, according to Micaela Cardoso, left Viola/Cesario "embarrassed" and s/he began to move Orsino's head away. This embarrassment might be with the homosexual or heterosexual implications of what Orsino has done. Cardoso suggested that Viola/Cesario's subsequent decision to put Orsino's head back in his/her lap indicated an acceptance of the risk implied by her disguise that Viola now began to enjoy. Once more, this enjoyment encompassed simultaneously the homosexual and heterosexual implications of their intimacy.

In Antonio and Sebastian's second meeting, the semi-circular objects were turned round to create a church setting, indicated by the fact that Malvolio was also there in prayer. Such a setting invited reflection on the role of the Church as providing something of a haven for men together in private, while proscribing just such intimacy between men publicly. It created a private space for the conversation between the two men, but one that was also subject to public scrutiny, a reading reinforced by the presence of the disapproving Malvolio. Similarly, the fact that the semi-circular objects were turned outwards created a sense of the secrecy of the encounter, but also a sense of entrapment.

⁴⁴ This double sense of secrecy and entrapment was highlighted once more at the end of their conversation as the two objects were pushed together and closed.

III. IV. The “Other Body” of Queer Desire

Queer possibilities were also signalled in the production’s evocation of the “other” body, whether in Smith’s sense of the queering of particular body parts and movements, or through the inclusion of a third person who came between heterosexual couplings. The possibility of a homoerotic reading of Antonio, for instance, was signalled by a silver earring in his right ear. Although there was not an explicit earring ‘code’ in Portugal during the 1970’s, it became common knowledge among Portuguese gay men that if a man wore an earring in his left ear, he was heterosexual, but if he wore it in his right ear, it was a signal to other gay men that he was gay.⁴⁵ As Miguel Vale de Almeida points out in relation to the use of handkerchiefs as a form of gay dress code, these signs have now been absorbed into the mainstream and their specifically gay valence lost:

Nowadays, we see young men in Lisbon wearing blue handkerchiefs in their back left pockets who would blush if they knew what that had signified fifteen years ago.⁴⁶

Such processes have been described by Leo Bersani as “de-gaying”, where the increased presence of homosexuality in the mainstream leads, paradoxically, to its decreased

⁴⁴ In interview, Nuno M. Cardoso characterised this space as an “espaço permissivo” (a permissive space).

⁴⁵ My thanks to Fernando Cascais for his comments on this.

⁴⁶ “Hoje veêm-se rapazes em Lisboa usando bandanas azuis no bolso esquerdo traseiro que corariam se soubessem o que isso significava há 15 anos”. Miguel Vale de Almeida, “O Brinco à Esquerda” in *Os Tempos que Correm, Crónicas do Público*, (Oeiras: Celta, 1996), p. 19.

visibility.⁴⁷ It is unlikely that many members of the TNSJ audience interpreted Antonio's earring as a homosexual sign. To some, it may have reinforced his character identity as a pirate. It may even have reminded some of the well-known portrait of Shakespeare with an earring in his own ear. My point is only that a homosexual reading of Antonio, for those who chose to interpret it in this way, was made available through this strategically-placed piece of body jewellery.

This possibility of reading Antonio as homosexual was reinforced by other suggestions of physicality in his relationship with Sebastian. During the first scene between them, there was a fleeting moment of physical intimacy when Antonio put his hand on Sebastian's knee. He removed it quickly, but this did not seem to be because of an adverse reaction from Sebastian. When they parted, there was also a close physical embrace between the two actors, although only Sebastian was visible to the audience as Antonio remained in darkness throughout the scene. Both of these kinetic gestures could be read *either* as signs of friendship *or* as signs of an erotic relationship.

The "other" body was also suggested in the production's stress on the consistency of triangular relationships as opposed to what Alan Sinfield has called "the terrorism of coupling", whether homosexual or heterosexual.⁴⁸ This is already enabled by the play text, where Olivia comes between Sebastian and Antonio (or is it Antonio that comes

⁴⁷ Leo Bersani, *Homos*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 31-2. Bersani comments on de-gaying that "(n)ever before in the history of minority groups struggling for recognition and equal treatment has there been an analogous attempt, on the part of any such group, to make itself unidentifiable even as it demands to be recognized".

⁴⁸ Sinfield made this comment in a seminar on the limits of a queer reading in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Sussex University (30/10/2002). This seminar appears as an article entitled "Cultural Materialism and Intertextuality: The Limits of Queer Reading in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*" in *Shakespeare Survey 56* (*Shakespeare and Comedy*), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 67-78.

between Sebastian and Olivia?) and Viola/Cesario comes between Orsino and Olivia. In this production, there were several reminders that a third person represented an emotional bond at least as strong as that of marriage. The ending of the play stressed this particularly. At this moment, Sebastian and Viola seemingly have pledged themselves to their respective partners. Yet in the production, they then appeared back-to-back, naked, prompting a query as to whether the greater emotional attachment was to their partners or to their twin. Moreover, the play ended with Feste singing his song alongside the two twins, a triangular image which sidelined both Olivia and Orsino. Perhaps the most curious performance moment in this respect, however, involved Antonio. After witnessing the 'miraculous' metamorphosis of Cesario into Sebastian, he was effortlessly reconciled with his old enemy Orsino and reappeared by his side as a wedding guest celebrating the marriages. He raised a glass and laughed enthusiastically at Orsino's jokes. After the play ended and the actors came forward to take a bow, Jorge Vasquez, the actor playing Antonio, advanced with the actors playing the twins on either side of him. The inclusion of Antonio within the festive conclusion and as a crucial lynchpin between the twins was symbolic of the inclusive place allowed queer desires even into the performance of the text's conventionally heterosexual ending.

IV. A Controlled Freedom: The Globe's Open-Air *Twelfth Night* (2002)

If queer times, spaces, and bodies structured *Noite de Reis*, this was true to a much lesser extent in the Globe's all-male *Twelfth Night*. Despite the production's widespread focus on the performativity of gender roles, there was little sense of a concern with sexuality

informing the production.⁴⁹ Thus, a first point to make is that cross-gender casting does not *in and of itself* make available a queer reading of sexuality. Indeed, in this particular production, sexual transgression in terms of sexuality was almost exclusively confined to certain moments of the Orsino-Viola/Cesario relationship.

Globe performances take place within a particular dynamic of historicity and contemporaneity. As W.B. Worthen notes, Globe performance “works (...) at the intersection between the early modern experience of theatre it labours to restore, and the postmodern regimes of theatrical performance and of history-performance that are its means of production”.⁵⁰ This dynamic structures the open air space where Globe performances take place. It is ‘like’ that of Shakespeare’s theatre in terms of architectural design or the division of the audience into those who pay more and occupy the seats and the ‘groundlings’ who pay less and stand in the yard. Yet it is also a peculiarly contemporary space, with fire regulations, notoriously officious ushers, aeroplanes which occasionally fly overhead and audiences taking part in the ‘Shakespeare experience’, which includes not only the performance, but also the gift shop, a guided tour, a meal in the restaurant and a trip on the river. Similarly, although the Globe makes much of the audience’s freedom to jeer, cheer or participate in performance ‘like’ an early modern audience might have done, such participation is also expected to remain within limits. These limits on audience behaviour have more to do with the conventions of being an audience in a closed twentieth-century theatre than being a member of an open air early

⁴⁹ See Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of the gender politics of this production.

⁴⁹ W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and The Force of Modern Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.83.

⁵⁰ W. B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and The Force of Modern Performance*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.83.

modern audience.

Nevertheless, as Worthen points out, audience behaviour is “at once *democratic* and *potentially disruptive* of the Globe’s claims to devise and control authentic performances onstage” (my emphasis).⁵¹ There is a strong element of sensuality, for instance, in being a member of the audience at an open air performance, even in controlled surroundings such as that of the Globe. Groundlings close to the stage can hear the swish of a skirt as an actor moves downstage or catch a glimpse of a stocking beneath the skirt as the actor turns round. Daylight performances bring a clarity that is both intellectually and sensually invigorating, while feeling the sun on one’s face or a breeze through one’s hair heightens appreciation of the performance. Evening performances allow the audience to sense the gradual fall of darkness and the simultaneous appearance of different forms of lighting in the theatre space. The jigs that often close Globe performances are energetic and hugely enjoyable to watch. Many such elements of open-air performance are uncontrollable in the sense that their effects cannot be gauged. Imagine, for example, what would happen if one of the groundlings suddenly felt moved to lean forward and lift up one of the performer’s skirts or if someone got so carried away by the rhythm of the jig that they got up on stage to join in. No doubt one of the ever present ushers would put a stop to this, but part of the mythology of the new Globe relies precisely on the audience policing themselves and their reactions, so that, ironically, the illusion of audience freedom can be maintained.

Within such a potentially volatile performance space, what bodies do on and offstage can have a powerful effect. In Act II Scene IV, the production emphasised

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 100.

suggestions of a homoerotic attraction between Orsino and Cesario through a series of choreographed body movements. The erotic charge of this scene has been stressed by Bruce R. Smith, who likens the beginning, when Orsino talks of Feste's song to Viola/Cesario, to the sharing of an erotic memory.⁵² Its easy, relaxed intimacy certainly contrasts greatly with Orsino's otherwise utterly conventional lover's communication with Olivia. In the Globe's staging of it, Orsino and Viola/Cesario sat on a wooden bench onstage. Orsino had his back to the audience while Viola/Cesario faced them. They listened to Feste singing to them from the musician's gallery. As the song began, Orsino stole glances at Cesario/Viola, but then turned away as s/he became aware of them. A few seconds later, Orsino took Cesario/Viola's hand only to let it drop almost immediately. Then, he put his hand on Cesario/Viola's knee. Yet when the "temps autre" of the song drew to a close, Feste knowingly placed his line "pleasure will be paid, one time or another" to underline the fact that he had witnessed their intimacy and had construed it to be specifically homoerotic intimacy. Orsino then upset the bench angrily and ordered everyone to leave. Finally, he 'remembered' that he was supposed to be courting Olivia and demanded that Cesario/Viola visit her. Yet even after this, both characters returned to the bench and hugged each other for just one moment longer than strictly proper. It looked as if they were going to kiss as their faces moved towards each other, but then they broke away at the last moment before moving closer one last time. This short extra-textual sequence emphasised how attracted Orsino was to Cesario *as a boy*, although this also included a staged awareness that this was something he *shouldn't* be feeling. The staging played with a to-and-fro movement between two male bodies *next to* each other, which would signal a heterosexual relationship of companionship between

⁵² Bruce R. Smith, (1996), *Op. Cit.*, pp.114/5.

the two characters, and two male bodies *close to* each other, which would emphasise an erotic attraction between them. The sense of the inappropriateness of the latter was conveyed by Feste's placing of his line about pleasure and the movements of attraction and repulsion between the two actors. In this comic duet, Feste appeared as a third, voyeuristic body who interpreted this short theatrical narrative for the audience as one explicitly of homoerotic desire.

Although Viola/Cesario played a somewhat passive role in this short sequence, much of the viability of a homoerotic reading of the relationship between Orsino and Cesario was sustained by the actor playing this role. In an excellent performance that balanced vulnerability and youthful confidence, Eddie Redmayne invoked a physicality and a tonality onstage that was not easily located in the masculine or feminine. It seemed, therefore, quite possible for such a character to generate desires of different kinds in the characters they encountered. This continued ability to inspire desire regardless of gender was highlighted in the production's final act. Conventionally, this becomes the act of sexual certainties, but the Globe production emphasised how it might still maintain a queer twist. Orsino directed the anger at his betrayal towards Olivia rather than, as in most productions, at Viola/Cesario. This suggested that it was Viola/Cesario who was the object of Orsino's affection and Olivia who had come between them, rather than Viola/Cesario coming between Orsino and Olivia. When Viola/Cesario then spoke his/her love for the Count, the facial gestures of a rather startled Orsino made clear that he assumed this declaration of love to be coming from his male page Cesario rather than a woman. Even in the final moments of the play, Orsino addressed his "your master quits you" speech (V, I, 299-305) to Sebastian rather than Viola, having confused the two

twins. This moment emphasised continuing sexual confusion in relation to the twins, a confusion that their partners took with them into their heterosexual marriages.

Yet if queer presence was highlighted in performance, why was the production's representation of homoerotic attraction so very uneventful? Why didn't members of the audience jump up to protest (or to join in)? Part of the reason is that such moments took little of the performance time. Another reason lies in the new Globe's preferred performance style. As the Globe audience is seated on rather uncomfortable benches or standing throughout the performance, performers need to make sure their audience does not become restless. Thus, a particular performance style has come to characterise productions at the Globe which has its origins in this need to keep the audience's attention. Alastair Macauley parodies some of the defining characteristics of this performance style:

The method is simple: deliver everything like Christmas pantomime. Play broadly for laughs; wait for each laugh, invite the audience to boo or hiss the baddies; have cast members rush comically through the audience. The recipe works, only too well.⁵³

Although this is a somewhat caricatured depiction, each of the homoerotic moments described above was played very obviously for audience laughter. This laughter functioned, on the one hand, as a "solvent of morality" in that it played down any threat implicit in the attraction and allowed actors and audience to distance it comfortably from themselves. On the other hand, laughter pre-empted other possible audience responses to

⁵³ Alastair Macauley, Review of *The Maid's Tragedy* in *The Financial Times*, August 1997. Quoted by Worthen, (2003), *Op. Cit.*, p. 224, note 18.

the attraction, particularly more threatening ones. John M. Clum has argued that overt representations of homosexuality onstage continue to have a powerful charge:

The continuing shock value of open demonstrations of homosexual affection or desire shows not only the continuity of heterosexism but also *the theatrical principle that bodies contain the greatest potential danger for a contemporary audience, and theater's power stems from its danger.*⁵⁴ (my emphasis)

There remains, for example, something disturbing for modern audiences in the sight of two men kissing each other in the open air and in broad daylight, even when one of them is dressed as a woman.⁵⁵ This possibility was gestured towards in the production, but never actually shown. The possibility of homoerotic attraction was invoked to titillate the audience, but these displays of affection were contained within the strict choreography of the production in an unthreatening way.

What is exciting and energising about open-air performance is the radical instability of controlling meaning in such a setting. Even if the production had included a male-male kiss, for example, a plane might have flown over at that moment or a mobile phone might have been answered and the moment would have been lost. It is perhaps because of this unpredictability and the potential strength of reaction open air performance provokes that this production encouraged the audience to laugh the anarchic energy of sexual confusion away into the realm of mere comic possibility.

⁵⁴ John M. Clum, (2000), *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

⁵⁵ In an all-male production of *Richard II* that I saw at the Globe in 2003, a very short kiss between two male actors playing Richard and his queen provoked several sounds of playful disgust from the schoolchildren at the front of the stage, to which the two actors responded well.

V. “What Country, Friend, is This?”: Queer Cartographies in Tim Supple’s multicultural *Twelfth Night* (2003)

Mainstream productions of *Twelfth Night* have rarely focused upon intersections between gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Yet, in 2003, Channel 4 televised a multicultural production of *Twelfth Night*, directed by Tim Supple, which made the ethnic diversity of contemporary English society its central concern. Viola and Sebastian were illegal Asian immigrants and, along with Feste, were played by Anglo-Indian actors.⁵⁶ A white Olivia nevertheless appeared steeped in Catholic ritual. The Captain was possibly Greek or Turkish, Orsino and his court African, the priest Afro-Caribbean, and Maria Scottish.⁵⁷ The music for the production was composed by the Anglo-Indian musician Nitin Sawhney. The tension created between the historicity of the text and the contemporary context of the production thus provides an excellent opportunity to link the queer project of sexual transgression with what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has called “the fractal intricacies of language, skin, migration, state”.⁵⁸

The evocation of a time *out*, space *beyond* and *other* body associated with queer desires might appear to be more difficult to achieve on a mono-dimensional television screen than in the theatre. However, the production made use of television techniques such as jumpshots, flashbacks and split screen editing to convey sexual passion and infused specific locations with a sense of queer desire.

Supple recast Antonio and Sebastian’s difference from the norm as cultural rather than sexual. Thus, a queer sense of the mechanisms of exclusion and of a tension with the

⁵⁶ The actress who played Viola, Parminder Nagra, starred as the football-mad daughter of disapproving Anglo-Indian parents in the film *Bend it like Beckham*.

⁵⁷ The actor who played Orsino, Chiwitel Ejiofor, played the main role in Stephen Frears’ film *Dirty Pretty Things*.

norm was maintained and extended through a focus on ethnicity. It was conveyed particularly through location. Antonio first met Sebastian in what looked like a traditional working-class English café, but which turned out to be full of other Asian customers. Antonio was white and appeared English, but his conversation with Sebastian took place in both Hindi and English, with the sections in Hindi subtitled for television viewers. In the rest of the production, only the twins communicated in Hindi, so Antonio was immediately singled out as a character who could pass between cultures. The use of Hindi as a common linguistic bond also recast the intimacy between the two men in a modified form. In their next scene, Antonio and Sebastian appeared to be among the market stalls of the East End's Brick Lane, an area of London which is known for the large number of Asian immigrants who live and work there. The world of the street was exciting and vital. It was noisy, crowded, and possibly dangerous, especially for two men from different cultural backgrounds. Sebastian was at first filmed from behind and at a slightly high angle so that when a person drew near him, there was a moment's anxiety that it might be one of the two security men who had just been picked out by the camera. Further medium camera shots revealed Sebastian's relief that the person who had come up behind him was, in fact, Antonio. In a comic moment, Antonio gave Sebastian an A-Z to help him find his way around 'Illyria', but the threat to Antonio returned with a focus on the two undercover police officers who followed him as he left the market. Thus, although Antonio was given a privileged position as a cultural mediator through his relationship with Sebastian, the dangers of such a position, especially when he stood out as an outsider in Brick Lane, were also made clear.

⁵⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p.9.

If the dangerous vitality of the street functioned as the location for intimacy between men, the atmosphere of Orsino's court was characterised by a rather sterile sense of luxurious sensuality. As the Captain first spoke of Orsino, there was a jump shot to the muscular, handsome Count at archery practice. He was wearing a plain black shirt and a sarong, a piece of wraparound material that can be worn by both men and women and a fashion item that originated in Asia but has now been adopted into Western fashion. After Viola/Cesario joined Orsino's court, there was a highly sensual scene in Orsino's marble bathroom where s/he rubbed oils into Orsino's skin while they discussed Olivia. The bath water had filled the air with steam through which the outlines of the actors became blurred. As Orsino rose naked from the bath, he itemised the 'feminine' properties of his male page by putting his fingers first to Viola/Cesario's lips and then his/her vocal chords. Orsino's sexual approach here is indivisible from his status, as the sensuality of the encounter is built explicitly around the power differential between the Count and his page. It is heightened by the ethnic marking of Orsino as African and Viola/Cesario as Asian. This eroticisation of difference contrasts with the cultural mediation that characterises Antonio's relationship with Sebastian and provides a parallel with the encounters between Olivia and Viola/Cesario.

This parallel was made explicit in Viola/Cesario's first encounter with Olivia, as s/he fingered Olivia's lips during her "willow cabin" speech in a way that echoed Orsino's touching of her in this earlier scene. In so doing, however, s/he provoked a powerful erotic reaction from Olivia, which was signalled through jump shots of various images that flashed through Olivia's mind at this moment. The scene cut rapidly from Olivia's face to artistic images of female nudes and then back to Olivia again to illustrate

the strength of her response as well as a cultural imaginary through which specifically female desire might be represented. The camera then dwelt on the body and breast of one of the women in the painting. After Viola/Cesario left, Olivia went back over their encounter in a voice over, and the touch was repeated visually in flashback. This repetition emphasised the impact of the encounter on Olivia.

After this scene came one in Viola's bedroom which suggested something of the disruption provoked by the encounter. The scene began with Viola on top of her bed, having undressed from her disguise as Cesario. As she reviewed her own passion for Orsino and Olivia's for her, she moved to examine herself in a three-way mirror. The text reinstates a gender and sexual binary here, as it distinguishes between man and woman as well as homosexual and heterosexual desire. However, the three, rather than two, reflections that stare back at Viola from the mirror suggested an overstepping of this textual binary through the visual image. The reflections promoted a triple reading of sexual identity, where Viola/Cesario's ethnic difference was the third factor that disrupted the textual "either/ or" of gender and sexual difference.

While the dangerous but lively street was a place for encounters between men, and the court a somewhat ambiguously sexed location, it was in the inside spaces of Olivia's artificially natural garden that her encounters with Viola/Cesario took place. Bruce R. Smith emphasises the importance of gardens in the erotic imaginary as one of the liminal spaces of sexual desire:

Suburban brothel, gardens, forest, curtained bed – the one thing these diverse spaces have in common is the fact that all are, in some sense, spaces beyond. "Lust in action" asks not for a particular locale but for some kind of barrier – a wall, a ditch, a screen, a set of curtains – that

separate the here of ordinary experience from the there of sexual passion.⁵⁹

Kate Chedgzoy, however, points out that none of these places are strictly private and, as such, these encounters take place in “the public urban realm”.⁶⁰ Indeed, the public nature of contemporary privacy was highlighted in Supple’s production by the fact that even the garden came under video surveillance, a form of technology that challenges Smith’s separation of the “here of ordinary experience” from the “there of sexual passion”. However, the garden did function as a place of limited freedom for queer desire. Whilst Viola/Cesario’s first encounter with Olivia took place in a chapel, the second took place in the garden at nightfall. Olivia’s passionate pleas to Viola/Cesario were made in the semi-privacy of the bower and the maze-like walks of her garden, where sensual abstract sculptures of naked women provided a suggestive backdrop to her words. Maria even switched off the video cameras to allow the two of them some privacy. The eroticism of the encounter was conveyed through alternate camera shots of Olivia and Viola/Cesario’s mouths as they spoke to each other. The focus on the *femininity* of these mouths made this a particularly female to female eroticism. A lesbian reading of this encounter was thus evoked through visual images which conveyed an alternative version of events to that of the text the mouths themselves were speaking. Nevertheless, the fact that their next encounter took place inside the library indicated the temporary nature of this scenario of lesbian desire. In this respect, it is worth noting that the scenes between Olivia and Malvolio also took place in the garden, conveying an idea that although the

⁵⁹ Bruce R. Smith, (1996), *Op. Cit.* p.108.

⁶⁰ Kate Chedgzoy, *Measure for Measure*, (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000), p.42.

garden could temporarily suspend social and sexual norms, it could not suspend them indefinitely.

When Olivia proposed to Sebastian, he turned towards the invisible television audience as if asking them whether he should say yes or no, a marked attempt to 'involve' the audience in 'choosing' the correct, heterosexual option. The scene afterwards showed Olivia and Sebastian in bed after their marriage in order to reassure the (un)empowered television audience that 'their' choice had been the right one. Whilst this might suggest a healthy society renewing itself through heterosexual attachment, especially when it brought together an Indian man and an English woman, the ending of the production nevertheless revealed a profound *malaise* in relation to difference at the heart of the society being represented. The final scene took place in Olivia's garden, with the sun about to set and with the garden lit by tiny lights. As the two twins found each other, both Antonio and Malvolio were shown being released. Antonio did not appear again, but when Olivia discovered the truth about the trick against Malvolio, she was so upset, she ran away into the garden crying and had to be comforted by Orsino. As the two heterosexual couples came together on separate garden benches, the ending seemed decidedly muted, with the obvious implication that the spitefulness with which Malvolio had been tricked had cast a shadow over the prospective marriages. Antonio seemed to have vanished. Although Orsino and Viola embraced, this was in no sense a festive conclusion. As such, it represented an essentially pessimistic assessment of the ability of contemporary English society to deal with its sexual, ethnic and class 'others'.

Conclusion

Paulo Eduardo Carvalho, in a review of a recent Ricardo Pais Shakespearean production, acknowledges that he finds it difficult to talk about Pais' productions in orthodox critical terms "firstly, because they are presented less as representations of a text, (...) and more as new ways of re-presenting that text in a variety of visual, aural, physical and kinetic discourses, if not as pure presentation".⁶¹ Much of the difficulty sensed by Carvalho represents fertile ground for queer theatre analysis, for Pais' privileging of the discourses of the theatrical creates autonomous gaps, pockets and spaces from the text which are particularly connected with queer desires. In *Noite de Reis*, creating a considerable degree of autonomy for the performance text was crucial in constructing the possibility of a queer reading of the production. From small details like Antonio's earring, to the use of the visual image to convey alternative possibilities to those of the spoken text, to the disruption of a unified stage space in order to emphasise the multiple permutations of sexual identity, the theatrical and the queer each helped the other to emerge more powerfully. There were theatrical moments of great beauty in the production, like the newly-transformed Olivia walking through dim lighting across the stage or the white gauze curtain between Olivia and Viola lifting as Olivia fell to her knees. There were moments of suggestively homoerotic intimacy, such as when Antonio placed his hand on Sebastian's knee or embraced him before leaving. However, it must also be noted that there were no representations of the queer body in its moments of passion, ecstasy or

⁶¹ "Desde logo porque se oferecem menos como "representações" de um qualquer texto (...) e mais como "re-apresentações" desse texto numa variedade de discursos visuais, sonoros, físicos, cinéticos, etc., quando não mesmo como "pura apresentação". Paulo Eduardo Carvalho, "Escutar Pelos Olhos, Ver Pelas Vozes: Metamorfoses Perceptivas em *Um Hamlet a mais*, in the TNSJ newspaper *Dois Colunas*, 6, Set. 2003,

even vitality. Whilst a stylised form of acting enabled queerness to emerge without proscription therefore, it also removed something of the danger posed by the queer body. It effected a smooth transition from “aberrant desires” to “new fidelities,” as does the text, but smoothed over any disruptions implied by this transition. I would categorise this distance between the stylised queer body and the ecstatic queer body as precisely what distinguishes ‘non-normative’ from ‘anti-normative’ queer representations. The physical restraint of the queer body in the production left queerness providing an element of the exotic for those who do not require their Shakespeare straight, but still perfectly contained within the contemporary consumer experience of attending a Shakespeare play.

In this respect, there is a similarity between the TNSJ and the Globe productions of *Twelfth Night*. Moments of intimacy between Orsino and Cesario/Viola were carefully choreographed so as not to offend a mainstream audience and the open air environment was carefully policed by ushers and by performers. As such, queerness aroused interest, but was not physical enough to alienate the Globe’s audience in their enjoyable, but sanitised, trip through the ‘Shakespeare experience’. Yet it is also true that both productions invoked queer possibilities *well into the heterosexual ending*. The TNSJ gave a special place to Antonio and to the strength of the relationship between the twins which marginalised not queerness, but the marriages. The Globe suggested a continuing confusion relating to the twins which made the restoration of ‘natural’ order somewhat tenuous. Both endings opened up the arbitrary closure of the text through specifically theatrical means.

p.17. This article, an excellent example of Portuguese performance analysis, was one of a series of reviews of Pais’ production of *Um Hamlet a Mais* in 2003.

Tim Supple's television production, like Pais's stage production, explicitly offered itself as an alternative to conventional productions of Shakespeare. Its resignification of difference as cultural difference in the Antonio-Sebastian relationship and the location of their exchanges in the Anglo-Indian cultural context of the street enabled connections to be made between sexual and ethnic diversity. The garden setting and television close ups of Olivia and Viola/Cesario's very female mouths were suggestive of a scenario of specifically lesbian eroticism. As such, these representations seemed to move away from representing queerness as the non-normative towards an anti-normative representation of queer desire. However, I have my doubts about the effectiveness of television as a medium in the representation of queerness. It lacks the ability to properly linger over such moments without seeming voyeuristic. It has a tendency to flatten the volatility of desire, despite the creative use of jumpshots and other television techniques. Ironically, then, what this television production did most effectively was to show the unhappiness of a society based on compulsory heterosexuality which cannot, however, adequately represent alternatives to its own norms.

7. The “temps autre” of Olivia’s (Claudia Cadima) reverie as Viola (Micaela Cardoso) passes behind the gauze curtain in the TNSJ *Noite de Reis*. Copyright João Tuna. Courtesy of the TNSJ.

8. Viola (Micaela Cardoso) makes her first approach to the veiled Olivia (Claudia Cadima) and her household in the TNSJ *Noite de Reis*. Copyright João Tuna. Courtesy of the TNSJ.