

Performing Queer Shakespeare

by

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For Steve Burrus, with my deepest gratitude.

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## Preface

My journey to academia started as an actor, with a back-story including time as a graduate student at the University of North Texas, several years with Impulse Productions in Dallas (a theatre company that I co-founded and co-operated), three seasons with Shakespeare in Santa Fe, and a Ridiculous-inspired first-contact with queer Shakespeare at the University of New Mexico. However, even before my queer *Titus* experience, I began a complicated, oftentimes tortured relationship with “text” by taking Shakespeare as literature classes to supplement my acting coursework. The text gave characters their words and provided existential reasons for their wants, needs, fears, and objectives, offering a blueprint for acting a role. However, text was also just words on a page – personal experiences guided my interpretation of a role, brought the words to life, and changed it into something unique: a performance.

At the same time that I was negotiating this textual duality, I started to self-identify as gay. Coming out changed how I viewed the world and how I imagined the world viewed me. It provided a sense of belonging and community, but it was also scary – I saw dozens of men waste away from AIDS-related illnesses. They included both casual acquaintances and close friends, not just guys from the local bars, but men I admired, such as Kenny and Larry from The Honeybees (the best 1960s drag troupe ever), and even instructors from my acting program. Yet as frightening as it was to watch

so many people from my small corner of the world die, it also made me mad, made me political, and provided me with a sense of purpose.

I am formed from this confluence of theatre, Shakespeare and sexual identity, with scholarship informed by feelings of intense pleasure and desire, and fashioned from anger and anxiety.



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## Abstract

This dissertation analyzes the ways in which a few theater companies at the turn of the millennium have presented certain productions of Shakespeare's plays, and specifies how these performances emblemize queer theater. It considers how iconic aspects of lesbian and gay identity (sexual role-playing, camp, drag, historical figures, spaces of community, Gay Liberation, AIDS activism, gay-bashing) figure in the strategies theater companies use to stage Shakespeare (visual allusions, characterization, cross-gender casting, production metaphors, design choices). Rather than presenting a comprehensive account of queer theater, queer Shakespeare, or queer Shakespearean performance, I seek out flashes of queerness in present-day productions, and connect those flashes with the strategies used by a number of theater companies performing Shakespeare.

This dissertation contributes to queer cultural history, to theater studies, and to literary/critical explorations of gender and sexuality as identities performed on the post-modern theatrical stage. Drawing on theater history, cultural studies, lesbian and gay/queer studies, performance studies, and literary analysis, I attempt to answer several interdisciplinary questions: What does it mean to queer Shakespeare? What does it accomplish when critics, scholars, historians, activists, and artists bring Shakespeare and queer theater into collaboration? And finally, if contemporary performance offers a

viable means of queering early modern plays, what are the implications for Shakespeare criticism and performance, theater history, and queer cultural studies?

I examine Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre Company's productions of several Shakespearean plays, including *Hamlet* (Giles Havergal and Philip Prowse), *Titus Andronicus* (Keith Hack and Amanda Colin), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Havergal and Prowse), and *Troilus and Cressida* (Prowse), arguing these productions re-signify iconic aspects of gay male culture, creating the roots of queer Shakespeare. Turning to Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (Declan Donnellan), I argue that cross-gender casting can be a powerful tool for queering Shakespearean romantic comedy. Finally, I compare all-male post-millennial productions of a single play – *Twelfth Night* – by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (Tim Carroll), Cheek by Jowl (Donnellan), and Propeller (Edward Hall), in order to delineate those strategies, besides cross-gender casting, that make Shakespeare queer – or not queer.

## Chapter One:

### How to Perform Shakespeare Queer

In 1990, as part of an acting-class exercise in Ridiculous Theatre, I played Saturninus, doubled as Aaron, and stood in for Lavinia in a studio production of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*.<sup>1</sup> Our director, Kestutis Nakas, had previously produced a Ridiculous *Titus* at Manhattan's Pyramid Club in 1980; in restaging it at the University of New Mexico, he hoped to release his students from what he called "institutional Shakespeare."<sup>2</sup> Instead of "playing the verse" as we had been taught in acting and voice classes (stressing active verbs and colorful descriptors, carefully mapping stops at the ends of lines, and pausing an appropriate amount of time for different punctuation marks), Kestutis wanted us to "forget the text" and simply speak Shakespeare's words. Employing the strategies of Ridiculous Theatre, our *Titus* heightened dramatic situations

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Ludlam's Playhouse of the Ridiculous presented drag adaptations of classic works of literature, drawing from popular culture, film, and a variety of other contemporary sources. For more on Ludlam and Ridiculous Theatre, see Charles Ludlam, *The Complete Plays of Charles Ludlam* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1989); Steven Samuels, "Introduction," in *Ridiculous Theatre: Scourge of Human Folly: The Essays and Opinions of Charles Ludlam*, ed. Steven Samuels (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992), vii-xii; Don Shewey, "From Invisible to Ridiculous: The Emergence of an Out Theater Aesthetic," in *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theatre*, ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 135-51; David Kaufman, *Ridiculous! The Theatrical Life and Times of Charles Ludlam* (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Kestutis was a veteran of the East Village *avant-garde* art scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the founder and artistic director of the off-off Broadway theater company Gates of Dawn, as well as a contemporary of Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, Ethyl Eichelberger, and other queer performance artists.

by emphasizing the comedic elements of the tragedy, but Kestutis also insisted that we play our parts with sincerity and honesty.

Dramaturgically, many roles were double-cast, with only a costume piece to indicate character. As Aaron the Moor, for example, I wore a brown polyester vest and matching trousers stuffed with an enormous codpiece while as Saturninus, a Burger King crown designated my character. In addition to the double-casting, many roles were also cross-gender cast. For instance, female actors playing Demetrius and Chiron in the rape scene chased a female Lavinia off-stage and dragged me back on (wearing Lavinia's long, blond wig to demarcate character). I suffered their cruel attack (as a sort of stunt-doubling), and afterwards crawled back off-stage, to be replaced once again by the original actress. Kestutis encouraged us to enjoy ourselves, to make bold physical choices, and to proceed fearlessly at breakneck speed. It certainly wasn't great Shakespeare and it might not have been very good theater, but it remains firmly rooted in my memory as a moment of first contact – with cross-gender casting, and, more importantly, with queer Shakespeare.

That production of *Titus*, even with its flaws, changed my conception of Shakespeare. The production took words with specific cultural significance, expanded their meanings to reflect my experiences, interests, and desires, and opened Shakespeare to multiple possibilities. I learned, for example, that any actor could play any part – just because a character was one gender, it did not necessarily follow that the actor playing the role had to be of a similar gender. This made sense, as I was well aware of cross-dressing as a Shakespearean thematic trope, especially in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, the former being the focus of our third year of acting class and the latter being a main



stage production that Fall. Yet for the first time I saw cross-dressing as more than just a function of disguise in romantic comedy; cross-gender casting drastically affected how we presented our *Titus* and how the audience received it. Crossing actor's genders created unexpectedly homoerotic situations, such as when I played a love scene as Aaron with a male gendered Tamora. I had acted Romeo two years previously on the University's main stage, so I had an idea what it was to play a Shakespearean lover "straight." And of course, as a young gay (and very serious) student actor, I knew about the "two Antonios" and was well-versed in the tradition of Achilles and Patroclus from *Troilus and Cressida*; however, by comparison, presenting a love-scene between a male Tamora and a male Aaron seemed shocking, illicit, transgressive, and exciting.

Importantly as well, Kestutis insisted on a moment of silence before the show started to commemorate the actors from his previous *Titus* who had died from AIDS in the previous decade, most notably John Sex who played Tamora. In that moment, we felt connected to the queer political movement through Shakespeare. While not explicitly linked with the text of *Titus Andronicus*, that instant nonetheless related our Shakespearean performance to Kestutis' previous production, and to a world that was larger than our black-box theater.

This was my first encounter with what Kestutis called "queer theater." The sense of opportunity enabled by that *Titus* – to explore, to play, and to experiment with Shakespeare – shaped my conception of what a queer theater can accomplish. Perhaps most important for me initially, queer theater reflected my sexual identity, even when sexuality was not part of the text. Certainly, an erotic component is central to most conceptualizations of queer theater, and yet there is more to queer theater than simply

presenting homoerotic encounters on stage. It also speaks to the experience of being an outsider in a society that often does not value such difference, accounting for the feelings of loneliness, isolation, and misunderstanding caused by being an outsider, and proposing an alternative community. Queer theater reflects the sorrow, anger, and fear of an entire group of people responding to heterosexism, homophobia, AIDS, and threats of violence; yet at the same time, queer theater can provide joy, pleasure, and fulfillment by questioning the concept of normal and celebrating difference. These two objectives quite often work in unison, with the intention that, as Kestutis later described, “As an audience member, you laughed you ass off and cried your eyes out at the same time.”<sup>3</sup>

In that queer *Titus*, we focused not on the contradictions, but on the opportunities presented by performing queer Shakespeare; in this dissertation, I want to expand on the possibilities to which that Ridiculous-influenced production of *Titus* first alluded. My primary goal is to analyze the ways in which a few theater companies at the turn of the millennium have used cross-gender casting in certain productions of Shakespeare’s plays and to detail how I believe these performances emblemize queer theater. It is not my intention to present a comprehensive history of queer theater, queer Shakespeare, or queer Shakespearean performance; instead, I seek out flashes of queerness in present-day productions, and connect those flashes with strategies practiced by a number of

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<sup>3</sup> Kestutis Nakas, e-mail message to the author, September 3, 2008. He goes on to explain: “What Charles Ludlam mastered, both as actor and director, was an ability to sustain the pathos of a tragic situation even as he dipped into moments of ridiculousness. Comedy and tragedy could exist simultaneously in his world because as an actor he identified with, experienced and communicated the tragic dimension of whatever role he was playing. He could quickly pivot out from this tragic stance to a comic take, joke, or so called ‘camp’ signification and just as quickly pivot back into tragedy. He was skilled enough to take his audience along on a journey through many such twists and turns in the course of a play.”

companies. I recognize that my scope is narrow and that my perspective is subjective, limited by my own experience, and I hope to contribute to theater history and become an advocate for connecting Shakespeare's plays to contemporary queer culture. Admittedly, as a gay scholar, my own desire to discover sources of homosexual affirmation within early modern plays, perhaps as a way to recover a connection with the historical past, guides my line of reasoning. However, as a queer activist who came of age when the reaction to HIV/AIDS sharply accentuated the difference between queer and straight cultures, my investment in uncovering a plurality of norms likewise shapes this project. Both ventures are possible, as evinced by other gay, lesbian, and queer scholars upon whose work I draw, including Neil Bartlett, David Román, Alan Sinfield, and Alisa Solomon.<sup>4</sup>

### Project Parameters

I begin with the proposition that performance is a viable, vital, and vibrant means of queering Shakespeare on the late- and post-millennial stage. I hope to build upon an understanding of Shakespeare in performance to include queer theater, while at the same time revising the conception of queer theater so that it can also include the contemporary performance of early modern plays. By linking these two, I expand the traditional boundaries of both Shakespeare studies and queer theater history, which oftentimes remain restrictive fields. Early modern studies have proven exceptionally rich for highlighting Shakespeare's historical importance in challenging tendentious perceptions

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<sup>4</sup> These critics have articulated the conceptions of gay theater, queer theater, and performance that serve as the basis of my own enunciation. See later notes for explicit connections and bibliographic information.

of sexuality and gender identity, and early modern scholars have demonstrated how history informs the construction of gender and sexual identity in the present. However, these scholars tend to say little about how Shakespeare's plays in modern productions can also inform present-day conceptions of sexual and gender identity.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, queer scholars often include cinematic adaptations of Shakespearean plays as part of their purview; however, they are surprisingly mute on the subject of Shakespeare on stage in the present.<sup>6</sup>

One problem of putting Shakespeare and queer theater into conversation is in deciphering what they offer one another. It is a difficult prospect to consider, as this conversation necessarily interrogates historicism's authority as the principal means by which we understand Renaissance drama and the edgy, outsider appeal of queer theater. My aim is to show how modern performances of early modern plays can call attention to issues of gender and sexuality in the present, while at the same time expanding the traditional parameters of queer theater. To accomplish this, my methodology varies in modes and objects of analysis.

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<sup>5</sup> There are exceptions to this generalization. Alisa Solomon, for example, writes a queer critique of Cheek by Jowl's all-male *As You Like It* (Declan Donnellan, 1991) and James C. Bulman cites queer theory in his account of the same production. See Alisa Solomon, "Much Virtue in If: Shakespeare's Cross-Dressed Boy-Actresses and the Non-Illusory Stage," in *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997): 21-45; James C. Bulman, "Bringing Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* Out of the Closet: the Politics of Gay Theater," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 22.3 (2004): 31-46; included in *Shakespeare Re-Dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008); expanded to include Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's *Twelfth Night* (Tim Carroll, 2002) in "Queering the Audience: All-Male Casts in Recent Productions of Shakespeare," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Richard Burt, *Unspeakable Shaxxxspeares: Queer Theory and American Kiddie Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), an examination of the ways in which modern cinema has queered Shakespeare.

I begin by examining the Citizens' Theatre Company of Glasgow's productions of several Shakespearean plays, including *Hamlet* (Giles Havergal and Philip Prowse, 1970), *Titus Andronicus* (Keith Hack and Amanda Colin, 1971), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Havergal and Prowse, 1972), and *Troilus and Cressida* (Prowse, 1973), as well as Seneca's *Thyestes* (a source for *Titus*, David Hayman, 1975). Several factors contributed to my decision to start with the Citz'. I was interested in looking at multiple productions by a single company to map the ways in which local staging strategies, over time, might become representative of queer theatre. I also wanted to look at a company that influenced later generations of queer artists. Finally, I wanted to look at performances after gay theatre, in proximity to Gay Liberation, but before the gay male vernacular became part of the popular imagination.

Next, my analysis turns to the consideration of a single production: Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (Declan Donnellan, 1991). I wanted a production that came after the start of the AIDS epidemic. AIDS played a significant role in formulating my identity, and I was interested in how it affected Shakespearean performance (if at all). Furthermore, I wanted a production that both Shakespeare and queer scholars had studied, even if peripherally, so that I could join an ongoing conversation. I wanted a popular production, something global to contrast with my own local conception of queer Shakespeare. I also wanted a production that stayed faithful to Shakespeare's words, but also pushed against his dramatic situations.

I end my study by considering the ways in which three different theatrical companies utilize cross-gender casting in all-male productions of a single play – *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (Tim Carroll, 2002), Cheek by Jowl (Donnellan,

2003), and Propeller (Edward Hall, 2006). *Twelfth Night* has experienced a post-millennial cross-dressed renaissance, with five professional cross-gender cast productions in six years. In addition to productions by the Globe, Cheek by Jowl, and Propeller, Neil Bartlett directed a selectively cross-gender cast *Twelfth Night* for the Royal Shakespeare Company (2007, as part of the RSC's "Complete Works of William Shakespeare") and the Queen's Company presented an all-female version of the play (Rebecca Patterson, 2008). However, I kept my focus on all-male *Twelfth Night* to maintain manageable scope. I was interested in the productions' differences and similarities, and in trying to articulate what makes a production queer and what makes it not queer. I wanted a play that has been well-studied by queer Shakespeare scholars but also a play that had never seemed to me to be particularly queer in performance, to see if the fact of all-male casting made a discernable difference.

My analysis of these productions underscores the relationship of text, performance, and reception in order to argue for the efficacy of certain theatrical strategies to queer Shakespeare. Specifically, "text" provides the raw material of analysis, notably Shakespeare's words and his presence as a figure of cultural significance. Not even accounting for the differences between early modern London and the post-modern stage, cultural and social contexts vary greatly from 1970s Glasgow, to 1991 London, to the United States after 2000. It follows that how we view performances must necessarily also change in these different circumstances. Thus, I use "performance" to refer to the ways in which the actors, directors, designers, and dramaturges envision and/or present their work; however, performance also self-referentially indicates a field of study and the discourse that surrounds the production of an embodied, performed

event. Performance is both reliant on and separate from the text, in essence creating a play-text to account for the differences from one production to another. This is where the idea of “reception” comes into play – the words on a page become performed on a stage, which the audience receives, interprets, contextualizes, and re-signifies with new meaning. Previous exposure to the text, as well as uniquely individual and communally shared cultural experiences, have an effect on how spectators view stage plays, and what they relate to and recognize in a performance. In some instances, the connections between these categories (text, performance, reception) are explicit, while in others the associations are implied.

I do not suggest that there is an easy or self-evident relationship between text and performance; though these concepts cooperate in this dissertation, these categories are often in contestation with each another. Both terms are intrinsically unstable. Text, for example, can connote multiple possibilities and refer to variety of works, volumes, or editions. Especially given the work of textual scholars and in the advent of electronic publishing, text is more unstable than ever.<sup>7</sup> As Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass point out, “For over two hundred years, *King Lear* was one text; in 1986, with the Oxford Shakespeare, it became two; in 1989, with *The Complete King Lear 1608-1623*, it became four (at least).”<sup>8</sup> According to de Grazia and Stallybrass, the de-stabilization of *Lear* indicates, “We are no longer agreed on the fundamental status of the textual object

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<sup>7</sup> See, among many others, Peter Shillingsburg, *From Gutenberg to Google: Electronic Representations of Literary Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, “The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44.3 (1993), 255.

before us.”<sup>9</sup> However, the instability of the Shakespearean text does not thereby privilege performance as something more stable or secure.

Indeed, performance involves its own instabilities; performance is ephemeral, varying from production to production, company to company, cast to cast, event to event, actor to actor, and even moment to moment. And, it is increasingly understood as separate from text, as well as textually-based theater. Richard Schechner, for instance, in an often-cited keynote address delivered at the Association for Theatre in Higher Education in 1992, argued, “The new paradigm is ‘performance’, not theatre.”<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, performance scholars point out that much of the world’s drama is constituted without the written dramatic scripts that we in the West often associate with traditional forms of theater; consequently, a corollary between text and performance is neither compulsory nor irrevocable. W.B. Worthen argues, for instance, “Reconsidering how, or whether, texts are actually opposed to performances, is one way to rethink the disciplinary instruments that map the contours of drama/theatre/performance studies today.”<sup>11</sup> However, Worthen cautions against the reduction of the tension between theater and performance studies to a binary of dramatic text and performance. Instead, as Jill Dolan urges, theater studies should be “acknowledged and visited, rather than raided

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> He goes on to say: “Theatre departments should become ‘performance departments.’ Performance is about more than the enactment of Eurocentric drama. Performance engages intellectual, social, cultural, historical, and artistic life in a broad sense. Performance combines theory and practice. Performance studied and practiced interculturally can be the core of a ‘well-rounded education.’” Richard Schechner, “A New Paradigm for Theatre in the Academy” in *The Drama Review* 36.4 (1992), 9.

<sup>11</sup> W.B. Worthen, “Disciplines of the Text/ Sites of Performance,” *The Drama Review* 39.1 (1995), 14. See also Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).



and discarded.”<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, my intention is to examine the extent to which different strategies of performance, in particular cross-gender casting, enable the dynamism of both text and performance; and rather than viewing the two categories in opposition, I, like Dolan, suggest that performance and text, however unstable each are, cooperate in mutually productive ways.<sup>13</sup>

This dissertation simultaneously contributes to queer cultural history, to theater studies, and to literary/critical explorations of gender and sexuality as identities performed on the post-modern theatrical stage. I begin by cataloguing and identifying the performance strategies employed by theater companies to queer Shakespeare (visual images, character choices, casting decisions, production metaphors – things that make watching a performance distinct and different, for better or worse, from simply reading a play). Then, I filter those aesthetic choices through the context of lesbian and gay culture and sexual identities (sexual role-playing, camp, drag queens, drag kings, iconic figures, Stonewall, AIDS activism, gay-bashing – things that are historically linked with and emblematic of lesbian and gay experience). Finally, by drawing on theater history, cultural studies, lesbian and gay/queer studies, performance studies, and literary analysis, I attempt to answer several interdisciplinary, intertextual questions: What does it mean to queer Shakespeare? What does it accomplish when we (critics, scholars, historians,

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<sup>12</sup> Jill Dolan, “Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance, and the ‘Performative,’” *Theatre Journal* 45.4 (1993), 429.

<sup>13</sup> For a useful genealogy of the emergence of performance and performance studies especially as the fields relate to Shakespeare studies, see Barbara Hodgdon, “Introduction: A Kind of History,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005). 1-10. For more general genealogies, see Erin Striff, ed., *Performance Studies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); and Simon Shepherd and Mick Wallis, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

activists, artists) bring Shakespeare and queer theater into collaboration? And finally, if contemporary performance offers a viable means of queering early modern plays, what are the implications for Shakespeare criticism and performance, theater history, and queer cultural studies?

### Queering Cross-Gender Casting

The specific queer intervention of this dissertation is to bring a favorite subject of early modern queer scholars, cross-dressing/transvestism, into dialogue with contemporary theatrical practices. Literary critics have actively explored early modern anxieties about boy-actors and normative sexuality and gender within the cultural and theatrical contexts of the English Renaissance. Especially in light of on-going debates about whether early modern audiences simply accepted boys playing women's roles without undue notice, early modern scholars have accorded great importance to the theatrical motif of cross-dressing and transvestism, to the boys who played women's roles on the early modern stage, and to the erotic possibilities enabled by such imagined performances.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In particular, early modern cross-dressing has proven a fertile field for those scholars interested in queering the Renaissance. The reassessment originates with Juliet Dusinberre, who asserts that the impulse behind Shakespeare's boy-actor "playing woman playing boy" motif, especially in conjunction with the fact of the body of the boy actor on stage, forced early modern spectators to reassess their belief in divinely appointed gender roles because such performances destabilized sex roles and blurred gender hierarchies. Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Press, 1975; New York: St. Martin's Press, reprinted 1996). This blurring of genders between female and young male, such as occur on the early modern stage, also relates to the shared social status of boys and women. Lisa Jardine posits, "The dependent role of the boy player doubles for the dependency which is woman's lot, creating a sensuality which is independent of the sex of the desired figure, and which is particularly erotic where the sex is confused (when boy player represents woman, disguised as dependent boy)." Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983), 24. In effect, men focused interest on boys and women in the same way because women

In general, such a fluid notion of identity relies either on the sublimation of women and boy-actors into objects of heterosexist desire, or on boy-actors as objects of queer desire. Of course, arguing for cross-gender casting as a means to queer any English early modern play may seem reductive, because the history of that practice is so

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and boys shared the same economic dependency and sexual availability, creating a confused sensuality independent of the object of desire. "Eroticism in the early modern period," Jardine later clarifies, "is not gender specific, is not grounded in the sex of the possibly 'submissive' partner, but in the expectation of that submissiveness." Lisa Jardine, "Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency, and Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). Their similarities with early modern women notwithstanding, boy-actors prove erotically viable objects in their own right. Stephen Orgel productively asks, "What do boys and women have in common that distinguishes both from men, and renders both objects of desire for men?" Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 52. Valerie Traub argues that the boy-actor "made possible complex desires and fantasies, and mediated cultural anxieties" by acknowledging latent gender and erotic pressures. Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 117. Traub proposes "that the boy actor works...as the basis upon which homoeroticism can be safely explored – working for both actors and audiences as an expression of non-hegemonic desire within the confines of conventional, comedic restraints" (118). In part, the desirability of boy-actors stems from the idea that actors, particularly young male performers, prove difficult to categorize on a spectrum of male to female. Michael Shapiro argues against the general notion that the "complex figure of the male actor/female character/male disguise" dissolves into "a single androgynous entity." Instead, Shapiro believes the boys, or young men, "were androgynous only in the sense that they might be sex objects both to some men and some women." Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 144. The erotic viability of boy-actors is both dependent upon and beside the point of their masculine bodies. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue that the boy-actor's body becomes "the point of intersection between spectatorship, the specular, and the speculative." According to Jones and Stallybrass, the body of the boy actor "conjures up an eroticism which depends on the total absorption of male into female, female into male," which merges the body of the boy with an eroticized ideal of woman. Therefore, any of a number of the dramatic scenes where women expose their breasts, the boy actors would reveal their flat, boyish chests, not the female character's bosom; yet, the boy's chests become erotic objects, stand-ins for breasts, and so the sight of a boy's chest inspires an erotic desire not unlike that inspired by the sight of a woman's breasts. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Conversely, Marjorie Garber argues that the body of the boy actor deconstructs precepts about sexual identity, rather than creating desire. She asks: "What, then, if the 'boy' of 'boy-actor' fame, appropriated by some recent historicist critics as a sign of the homoerotic subtext of Renaissance theater, and by some feminist critics as a sign of female power and agency – what if that 'boy' were to be taken seriously as what it most disturbingly represents: the figure of the transvestite? Rather than appropriated, erased, or wished away, rather than taken primarily as a role model for female empowerment or gay – male or female – homoerotic play, this 'boy' is a provoker of category crises, a destabilizer of binarisms, a transgressor of boundaries, sexual, erotic, hierarchical, political, conceptual. The changeling boy." In this way, Garber calls attention to the multiple ways in which the boy actor has been appropriated for critical and political means in the context of both history and the present. Her challenge also calls attention as well to the political implications arising from a discussion of cross-dressing, transvestism, and cross-gender casting. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 90.

well known. “For centuries, in fact,” as Michael Shapiro points out, “the use of male actors in female roles had been normative not only in England but throughout the West.”<sup>15</sup> Early modern anti-theatricalists, whose polemics equated theater and its practitioners with sodomy, understood as any non-reproductive sexual acts, however, countered the normativity of this practice.<sup>16</sup> More importantly, what was “normative” in early modern London does not necessarily register as such today.

Because women’s roles were played by boys on the early modern stage, Shakespeare’s comedies frequently explore the possibility of gender as mutable by featuring young women who disguise themselves as youthful boys. Once disguised, these youths quite often become erotically attractive to both males and females, which even further complicates the performance of gender by adding an element of sexual incongruity. The normative replacement of homosocial pairs with heterosexual couples, which is a standard generic feature in romantic comedy, is challenged by the manifold erotic possibilities that arise when a play is cast across gender. An individual’s erotic

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Shapiro, “The Introduction of Actresses in England: Delay or Defensiveness?,” in *Enacting Gender on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 177. The notable exception to this practice is Spanish theater.

<sup>16</sup> I would like to point out that with boy players also come charges that stage-plays authorize and encourage illicit, licentious behavior in the audience. These boys, so pretty, so universally loved, and so powerless in a society that assigns them a submissive position, become dangerous because of their potential as erotic objects for both men and women in the audience. See Laura Levine, *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Just because early modern anti-theatrical polemicists feared that the boy actor’s bodies might incite lust among the early modern spectators, how then might seeing a fully-grown, sexually mature man playing these same scenes affect contemporary audiences? Anti-theatrical polemicists were concerned about numerous issues: a loosening of morals due to stage-plays, unaccompanied women at the theater as well as women being seen in public, the polymorphous perversity would invariably stem from public spectacle. On fears of the boy-actor inciting lust for sodomy, see, Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses* (1583) and John Rainolds, *Th’ Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (1599). Stubbes warned cautioned that playhouses were full of “such wanton, such bawdy speeches...such kissing and bussing” that he feared the men in the audience would go home together “very friendly, and in their secret conclaves they play the sodomites, or worse” (91). Rainolds cautioned that “*The putting of women’s attire upon men, may kindle sparks of lust in unclean affections*” (34).

desire is typically understood to be connected to gender, and thus cross-dressing problematizes desire because it destabilizes the relationship between the desiring subject and the object of his or her desire.

Post-modern cross-gender casting, present in all the productions studied here, boldly moves towards a theater that reflects alternative desires. Because Shakespeare wrote for a cross-dressed stage, all-male productions of his plays retain some degree of cultural and artistic acceptance, and in the advent of feminism, women playing male characters of Shakespeare has increased as women claim the right to play whichever roles they choose. And yet, because cross-gender casting is not the norm in contemporary Shakespearean performance, utilizing it as a performative strategy opens the plays to express alternative sexualities. When I first encountered it in the Ridiculous production of *Titus*, cross-gender casting spoke to my desire to experience two men playing Shakespearean love scenes. The openness of cross-gender casting to erotic possibility, which I first experienced as theater practitioner, remains strong twenty years later in my current incarnation as a literary scholar and performance critic.

What further connects cross-gender casting to lesbian and gay culture is the sense of playfulness typically found in drag performances. While I do not mean to suggest that the actions of the actors I study necessarily correlate with drag shows, there are certainly moments in performance in which some actors seem to draw from such cultural signifiers. But perhaps most important, cross-gender casting suggests alternative possible storylines in the performance of Shakespeare; it adds dimension to the ways in which the plots of Shakespeare's plays are transmitted and received. Instead of the boy always getting the girl, the use of a cross-gender cast enables a girl to get the girl, or a boy to get

the boy, or “what you will.” Thus, cross-gender casting can challenge the way in which we, as an audience, perceive “normal” staged and cultural actions and endings.

In the subsequent chapters, this phenomenon plays out in the analysis of desire as presented either as normative or disruptive in cross-gender productions. For example, Harold Bloom calls *Antony and Cleopatra* “an erotic tragedy,” praising Cleopatra’s beauty, femininity, and above all else, desirability.<sup>17</sup> Other critics have variously called Cleopatra “impossible for a boy to play,” “the chief feminine icon” of “white western culture,” and “an expert in guile, seduction, and putting men down.”<sup>18</sup> Cleopatra is a character ruled, and ultimately consumed, by her passions. Late in the play as she faces deportation to Rome, Cleopatra reveals a fear that “I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I’ th’ posture of a whore.”<sup>19</sup> The irony, of course, is that while her fear was realized in Jacobean performance by boys playing her part, in modern performance Cleopatra was almost always played by female actors – until the Citizen’s Theatre Company’s production of *Antony and Cleopatra* (Giles Havergal, 1972), which featured Jonathan Kent as Cleopatra.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Harold Bloom, “Antony and Cleopatra,” in *Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. Burton Raffel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 201. Bloom offers, “They fall in love with one another, resist and betray the love repeatedly, but finally yield to it and are destroyed by it, in order to fulfill their allied natures” (201).

<sup>18</sup> Joy Leslie Gibson, *Squeaking Cleopatras: The Elizabethan Boy Player* (Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2000), 104; Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation of Shakespeare’s Stage* (London and New York: Routledge 2001), xvi; David Bevington, “Introduction,” in *The New Cambridge Antony and Cleopatra*, ed. David Bevington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>19</sup> William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, one volume edition, ed. Stephen Greenblatt *et al* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), V.ii.215-218.

<sup>20</sup> The names of the women that have played Shakespeare’s Cleopatra makes for impressive reading, including Harriet Walter (2006), Frances de la Tour (1999), Judy Dench (1987), Vanessa Redgrave (1986), Janet Suzman (1974), Peggy Ashcroft (1953) and Vivien Leigh (1951), to name but a few of the most well-known actresses who have attempted the role. Aside from the Citizens’ Theatre

While I was not present at the event, in my research at the Scottish Theatre Archive, I found traces of Kent's Cleopatra, such as theatre reviews, photographs, programs, and a script with extensive directorial notes. Kent's performance of Cleopatra (herself an embodiment of desire) was substantially different from anything seen previously by Glasgow's local critics. The intensity with which some critics attempted to discount Kent's performance, including their choice of descriptors, when taken in concert with the images of Kent as Cleopatra plus program notes, suggests a performance that subverted heteronormative constructions of desire. By changing the gender of the actor playing Cleopatra, the production accesses a different trope of desire than that typically associated with Cleopatra, who is now called "mincing," "ambisexual," "homosexual," "transvestite," and "travesty" – as well as "beautiful – once the gender is changed."<sup>21</sup> This is why cross-gendered performance of Shakespeare is so important to this project – Shakespeare's plays can turn moments of prohibition into moments of access. A cross-gendered Cleopatra turns an erotic tragedy, a play in which "the lovers' sexual chemistry is crucial," into a plethora of homosexual delights.<sup>22</sup> This project takes pleasure in revealing those delights.

When examining gender as dynamic and mutable in theater history and as a reflection of society through all-male stage productions, early modern scholars have

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production, the only other well-known cross-gender cast Cleopatra is Mark Rylance (Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, 1999) – and Rylance's first professional acting job was at the Citz' in 1980.

<sup>21</sup> Letter to the Editor, *The Glasgow Herald*, May 19, 1972; Allen Wright, *Scotsman*, May 12, 1972; James F. McLean, *The Jewish Echo*, May 18, 1972; Christopher Small, *Glasgow Herald*, May 15, 1972; *La Bibre Belgique*, June 2, 1972.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Madelaine, *Antony and Cleopatra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 144.

relied on a variety terms, which I will also follow.<sup>23</sup> When describing character actions, such as Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede or Viola's disguise as Cesario, I will refer to cross-dressing. I will employ the term cross-gender casting when I describe a theater company's decision to have male actors play female roles or female actors play male roles. And for a final caveat, I should allow that while there most often is a tight link between cross-gender casting and performing Shakespeare queer, the connection between the two is not inevitable. There are cross-gender productions of Shakespeare that have little to offer by way of a queer reading, and productions of Shakespeare that are not cast

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<sup>23</sup> Phyllis Rackin, for example, argues that on the Renaissance stage, "feminine gender was inevitably a matter of costume; and in plays where the heroines dressed as boys, gender became doubly problematic, the unstable product of role-playing and costume, not only in the theatrical representation but also within the fiction presented on stage." Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," in *PMLA* 102.1 (1987): 29. Rackin continues: "The androgyne could be an image of transcendence-of surpassing the bounds that limit the human condition in a fallen world, of breaking through the constraints that material existence imposes on spiritual aspiration or the personal restrictions that define our roles in society. But the androgyne could also be an object of ridicule or an image of monstrous deformity, of social and physical abnormality. Both these images of the androgyne appear in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, expressing radically different conceptions of human life and society and of dramatic imitation as well" (29). Rackin labels this doubly problematic figure with "androgyne." Marjorie Garber, on the other hand, uses "cross-dressing" as a deconstructive practice, arguing that the figure of "transvestite" in its indeterminacy and uncertainty constitutes "the space of desire." Garber, *Vested Interests*, 9. Garber rails against "the tendency on the part of many critics ... to look *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser, to turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and to want instead to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders" (Garber's emphasis). Garber's deconstruction raises questions about authority, especially in relation to the performance of gender as a political or artistic imperative. For Garber, "The appeal of cross-dressing is clearly related to its status as a sign of the constructedness of gender categories." Valerie Traub distinguishes between "cross-dressing," which indicates wearing clothes across gender, and "transvestism," which employs an erotic, often homoerotic, component. Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 107. In *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Traub uses "crossdressing." Alternately, for Tracy Sedinger, "crossdressing" both describes what happens on-stage and implicates the audience as an active participant in the gender dynamics. Sedinger claims that "the spectator's relation to the crossdresser becomes crucial when we turn to plays in which crossdressing is a significant plot device and in which the split between ignorant spectators (within the play) and spectators-in-the-know both forwards the narrative and produces aesthetic and erotic pleasure." Tracy Sedinger, "'If Sight and Shape be True': The Epistemology of Crossdressing on the London Stage" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48.1 (1997): 64. She continues: "We use the term crossdressing to embrace those who dress to disguise as well as those who adopt specific items of clothing associated with the opposite sex. The latter practice has, of course, become so widespread that certain items of dress are no longer identified as exclusive to one sex."



across gender, but nevertheless provide flashes of queer identification. However, this dissertation primarily focuses on the intersection between cross-gender casts and queer performance in order to provide a modern, local, queer access to Shakespeare.

### Defining Terms: “Queer”

Perhaps the most disputed concepts with which I will engage are “queer” and “gay.” As Annamarie Jagose helpfully points out, each carries a distinct significance within the field of sexuality studies. According to Jagose:

Queer marks both a continuity and a break with previous gay liberationist and lesbian feminist models. Lesbian feminist models or organization were correctives to the masculinist bias of a gay liberation which itself had grown out of dissatisfactions with earlier homophile organizations. Similarly, queer effects a rupture which, far from being absolute, is meaningful only in the context of its historical development.<sup>24</sup>

All these terms have histories, which reflect both continuity and change; moreover, using “lesbian” or “gay” rather than “homosexuality” is reminiscent of a generational and organizational shift away from a certain way of thinking about sexuality (in terms of pathology, arrested development, stigma). Similarly, lesbian and gay carry different connotations than queer. Yet it would be an underestimation to suggest a generational divide is the only reason for the tension between these four terms. Instead, their difference comes as part of the evolution of how we think of sexual identity, with the friction marking, as Jonathan Dollimore proposes, “the historical shift in the

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<sup>24</sup> Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 75.

conceptualizing of ‘homosexuality’ from a behavior to an identity,” and then, perhaps, beyond identity.<sup>25</sup>

Many scholars use “queer” to provide a corrective to the limitations of an identity based largely on aberrance. David Halperin distinguishes between queer and its antecedent, gay identity:

Unlike gay identity, which, though deliberately proclaimed in an act of affirmation, is nonetheless rooted in the positive fact of homosexual object-choice, queer identity need not be grounded in any positive truth or in any stable reality... Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant.<sup>26</sup>

Linguistically, as Halperin suggests, “queer” means sick, abnormal, nonstandard, and carries dangerous connotations as a word for sexual or gender deviance; yet within this historical context, in the academy, “queer” has come to be celebrated as precisely a deviation from conceptions of “normal.” As Michael Warner posits, “For both academics and activists, ‘queer’ gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual... The insistence on ‘queer’ – a term initially generated in the context of terror – has the effect of pointing out the wide field of normalization, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence.”<sup>27</sup>

When scholars in gender and sexuality studies use the term “queer” to describe identity, its use counters those critics who argue that gay men and lesbians are “hidden”

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<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 46. Dollimore further argues, “In the nineteenth century a major and specifically ‘scientific’ branch of this development comes to construct homosexuality as primarily a congenital abnormality rather than, as before, a sinful and evil practice” (46).

<sup>26</sup> David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 62. Halperin goes on to argue that queer “demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative – a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or feels marginalized because of his or her sexual practices” (62.)

<sup>27</sup> Michael Warner, “Introduction” to *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xxvi.

in mainstream accounts of theater and social history by a societal authority that erases difference because “queer” (and queering) proposes the recognition of a different kind of presence.<sup>28</sup> Queer is strategically non-specific regarding sexual or gender practices, and critics use it to account for any non-normative act. Sodomy, for example, is a queer act in that it is both sexual and non-reproductive. Accordingly, the historical sodomite might be seen as a queer figure, more so than a historically anachronistic and socially inaccurate identity such as gay. This might seem paradoxical, inasmuch as the “historically constructed” queer allows for more “transhistorical” points of connection; however, using “queer” to describe such a figure allows us to identify with illicit historical figures, such as the sodomite, the pederast, the tearoom cruiser, or specific persons such as Oscar Wilde. What’s more, queer allows us to bring these historical figures into modern settings, and at the same time creates a recognizable presence in history. Such a presence allows us to identify the specter of illicit presence and note the complexity of desires of our predecessors, many of whom did not see their sexuality in terms of identity at all.

Yet for some, the term’s capacity for non-specificity also accounts for the weaknesses of “queer” as a term of critical intervention. Halperin allows that queer’s non-specificity, which is its “chief advantage,” can also be seen as its “most serious drawback...It gives a false impression of inclusiveness...promotes the misleading notion that queer solidarity has triumphed over historical divisions between lesbians and gay

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<sup>28</sup> See Carl Miller, *Stages of Desire: Gay Theater’s Hidden History* (London: Cassell, 1996); John M. Clum, *Still Acting Gay: Male Homosexuality in Modern Drama* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000); Alan Sinfield, *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theater in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1999); and two volumes edited by Kim Marra and Robert A. Schanke, *Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theater History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002) and *Passing Performances: Queer Readings of Leading Players in American Theater History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

men...and that differences of race or gender no longer pose political problems for queer unity.”<sup>29</sup> In its resistance to specifically referencing lesbian and gay identity, and its championing of a wide-array of non-normative erotic practices, the content and context of homosexuality can be lost. As Halperin astutely observes,

What makes ‘queer’ potentially so treacherous as a label is that its lack of definitional content renders it all too readily available for appropriation by those who do not experience the unique political disabilities and forms of social disqualification from which lesbians and gay men regularly suffer in virtue of our sexuality.”<sup>30</sup>

In Halperin’s eloquently negotiated assessment, queer is so open and expansive a category that it can be used without regard for those “lesbians and gay men [who] regularly suffer in virtue of our sexuality.”

Another drawback is in queer’s troubled past. While in the current vernacular, queer is oftentimes synonymous with lesbian and gay, for many lesbians and gay men, queer maintains a derogatory context. Judith Butler points out that the present-day use of queer does not erase the term’s violent history:

The term “queer” has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation. “Queer” derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time. The interpellation echoes past interpellations, and binds the speakers, as if they spoke in unison across time. In this sense, it is always an imaginary chorus that taunts “queer!”<sup>31</sup>

For some, queer is a term that will never overcome these negative sources in stigma, and it remains akin to “faggot” or “dyke” – intrinsically, inescapably pejorative.

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<sup>29</sup> Halperin, 64.

<sup>30</sup> Halperin, 65.

<sup>31</sup> Judith Butler, “Critically Queer,” *GLQ* 1.1 (1993):18.

Rather than itemizing comprehensively the endless possible points of access that these expressions offer, I seek to clarify the complex role of desire in specific moments of particular stage productions; in doing this, I highlight the tension between “queer” and “gay” that recommends the use of both terms in my analysis. On the one hand, gay represents a politically necessary, structured identity: gay allows participation in a social identity that is linked inextricably with sexuality and provides a sense of community and belonging. On the other, queer refers to the social pariah whose identity is tied not to sexual object choice, but related to non-standard social positioning. By responding to perceptions of normal, queer provides points of access to these productions for which gay simply does not account, especially regarding issues of gender non-conformity.

While I have an affinity for queer theater and an allegiance to queer politics, I am a gay man whose sexual identity is central to the modes of thinking and experiencing that shape my scholarship. Both gay and queer inform my understanding of myself as an individual and as a scholar, and thus both terms are important to this project. The two terms are not self cancelling, and in the popular vernacular, both often similarly refer to sexual identities (especially since *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.) Keeping these dual significations in productive tension, the subsequent chapters are infused with the energies of sexual desire, erotic object choice, communal affiliation, and participation with an affirmative political movement that rejects homophobia and heterosexism.<sup>32</sup>

## Defining Terms, Take 2: Queer Theater

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<sup>32</sup> As with queer, there are also shortcomings associated with the term gay, especially in regard to gender. It suggests, for some, an oppositional relationship not only with “straight” but also with “lesbian.” Gay is often gendered male, and reflects masculine interests.

In part, my use of “queer theater” pays homage to the conceptualization that I first encountered in Kestutis Nakas’ Ridiculous production of *Titus*, just as that project honored the memory of John Sex and the previous production. This use references a theatrical tradition in which queer bodies, practices, and ideologies are created, experienced, and articulated. An important aspect of queer theater is solo performances by artists such as Holly Hughes and Ron Athey, which reveal the performers as queer through biographically informed narratives.<sup>33</sup> As David Román explains, “The performative nature of queer lives involves a continuous negotiation between our senses of private and public selves that does not always amount to seeing these areas as discrete.”<sup>34</sup> Because queer performance draws so heavily on the personal, it might seem counterproductive to consider any non-autobiographical, text-based drama as part of that tradition.

Nonetheless, queer theater also includes companies that produce ensemble, textually-based performances, such as San Francisco’s Theatre Rhinoceros, Chicago’s About Face, and Washington D.C.’s Queer Theater (formerly Three Dollar Bill). These companies all refer to themselves as “Queer Theater,” even though the implications of queer typically change with each production: sometimes queer refers to a play’s author, sometimes to the play’s subject matter, and sometimes to the personnel who are staging

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<sup>33</sup> Holly Hughes is a lesbian feminist performance artist and playwright who received two Obie awards for excellence in off-Broadway theater (*Dress Suit to Hire*, 1988; *Clit Notes*, 1990). Some of Hughes’ plays, such as *Well of Horniness* (1983) and *The Lady Dick* (1984), delve into the contradictions within the lesbian community itself, satirically exploring such themes as butch/femme relationships and mistrust of bisexual women. Other works describe the isolation of the queer person in a heterosexual family, such as *Clit Notes*, which explicitly depicts her father’s disappointment with her lesbianism. Ron Athey produces elaborate rituals that evoke both ancient blood rites and the terrors of modern medicine. His work features on-stage piercing, scarification, and drag queen nurses, alludes to iconic queer figures such as St. Sebastian, and controversially uses his own HIV-positive blood in his performances.

<sup>34</sup> David Román, *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance* (New York: Grove Press, 1998), 7.

the production. What remains constant, though, is the recognition of a diverse audience composed of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer spectators. As Alexander

Doty suggests:

Queer positions, queer readings, and queer pleasures are part of a reception space that stands simultaneously beside and within that created by heterosexual and straight positions. These positions, readings, and pleasures also suggest that what happens in cultural reception goes beyond the traditional opposition of homo and hetero, as queer reception is often a place beyond the audience's conscious "real life" definition of their sexual identities and cultural positions – often, but not always, beyond such sexual identities and identity politics, that is.<sup>35</sup>

One way to connect Shakespeare to the late-millennial queer stage is to follow Doty and focus on the experience of the audience – what it receives, recognizes, and enjoys.

Theater has always provided a particularly potent means of expressing and capturing communal and individual experiences, even when that experience is camouflaged, hidden, or submerged.

Queer theater also alludes to gay theater from the 1960s and 1970s. Both predating and accompanying Gay Liberation, gay theater created a sense of community bound together by erotic difference and a rejection of heterosexuality.<sup>36</sup> Yet sometimes

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<sup>35</sup> Alexander Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>36</sup> Using Gay Theater implies an affirmative sexual identity, theatrical aesthetics associated with and contextualizing sexual identity, and affiliation with a political movement. Even though I combine the two under the aegis of a conceptually inclusive gay theater, Gay Theater was often separate from Lesbian Theater. The earliest gay theater companies were drag troupes, of which Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theater Company (founded in the late 1960s) is the most famous, bringing together popular culture, high culture, camp, parody and drag to create the Theatre of the Ridiculous. The Gay Theater movement, though, began in 1964 off-off Broadway with Lanford Wilson's one-act play (coincidentally, about a drag queen), *The Madness of Lady Bright*, produced by Joe Cino, who staged the early works of such playwrights as Robert Patrick, Jean Claude van Itallie, Doric Wilson, Tom Eyan, and William M. Hoffman, among many others at Caffe Cino. Two of the most important post-Stonewall self-identified gay theater companies were "The Other Side of Silence" (or TOSOS, founded by Doric Wilson, Peter del Valle, and Bill Blackwell in 1973) and The Glines (founded by John Glines, Barry Laine, and Jerry Tobin in 1976). Lesbian theater initially sprang out of the Feminist Movement, and the two most influential women's

gay theater happened unexpectedly, without deliberation. Michael Warren, for example, recalls sitting with his wife in the audience of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Troilus and Cressida* (John Barton, 1968) surrounded by gay men.<sup>37</sup> Chronologically, the production predates Stonewall and Gay Liberation, was not in any way an authorized or sanctioned gay event, yet it became a profound instance of "gay theater" for Warren, a "straight" member of the audience.

This is not to suggest that gay theater, or queer Shakespeare, occurs irrespective of a play's content. For instance, a chance to see Achilles and Patroclus, the same-sex lovers in *Troilus and Cressida*, would understandably draw eager gay men to the theater for the opportunity to see their own desires reflected on the stage. Especially in 1968, when homosexuality was still widely considered pathological and "Gross Indecency" had just been decriminalized in England, attending a performance of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Troilus and Cressida* became a safe place for gay men to come together as a community and find others like themselves, both on-stage and in the audience. In my assessment of Warren's anecdote, markers of gay theater included male homoerotic desire (Achilles and Patroclus), drag (Achilles disguises himself as Helen to seek "serious sport" with Hector), male nudity (the costumes barely contained the actors' genitalia, Achilles disrobes on-stage), and a connection with the historical past (homosexuality in

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companies are "At the Foot of the Mountain" (performing in Minneapolis since 1974) and Spiderwoman Theater (founded in New York in the mid-1970s by Lisa Mayo and Muriel and Gloria Miguel), both of which produce work that questions sex, sexuality, and gender. The most well-known lesbian troupe is Split Britches, founded in the late 1970's by Peggy Shaw, Lois Weaver, and Deb Margolis.

<sup>37</sup> Warren shared this anecdote in a conversation after a seminar on "Festival Shakespeare" at the 2006 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America in Philadelphia.



ancient Greece).<sup>38</sup> However, Warren's recollection also privileges the experience of audience members, which he identified as predominantly gay.

Queer theater also includes AIDS plays of the 1980s. These began with William Hoffman's *As Is* and Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart*, both of which attempted to solicit greater compassion and understanding for the gay community. This phenomenon occurred in response to the fear and loathing experienced in the wake of AIDS – thousands of gay men were dying from AIDS, which lacked sustainable, viable treatments, while at the same time gay men were blamed for the spread of HIV, and violently attacked by homophobic individuals and groups. Nicholas de Jongh identifies the central mission of AIDS plays as the fight against “an orthodoxy that regards AIDS as a mere local difficulty, principally affecting a reviled minority.”<sup>39</sup> By the late 1980s, though, the phenomenon of AIDS plays largely gave way to a different set of tactics: political protest and street theater. As Alisa Solomon points out:

When, for example, spectacle and public ritual are so movingly combined in the image and action of the Names Project Quilt, conventional theater seems redundant—at best a pale imitation of the formal, mass expressions that help give shape to real grief and anger. Time and again the spirited protestors of ACT UP have demonstrated that the theater of AIDS is in the streets.<sup>40</sup>

Nowadays, AIDS plays *per se* are regarded largely as a vestige of the 1980s, first wave of response to the AIDS epidemic. While I agree wholeheartedly with Solomon's assessment that the response of “conventional theater” to AIDS might have seemed “a

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<sup>38</sup> For a detailed description of the production's homoerotic aspects, especially of Achilles in drag, from a feminist perspective, see Rutter, *Enter the Body*, 120-3.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas de Jongh, *Not in Front of the Audience: Homosexuality on Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 179.

<sup>40</sup> Alisa Solomon, “AIDS Crusaders ACT UP a Storm,” *American Theater* 5.3 (October 1989): 39.

pale imitation” of what was happening “in the streets,” AIDS clearly has not disappeared from the post-millennial theatrical stage and can be found, albeit often metaphorically, in mainstream performances, including those of Shakespeare.<sup>41</sup>

### Defining Terms, Take 3: Performance

My field of inquiry includes productions of Shakespeare that occur over a period of almost 40 years; however, I have not seen all the performances I study. In *Unmarked*, Peggy Phelan outlines an “ontology of performance,” including the complicated relationship between those performances one has seen live and those that must be recovered via photographs, video recording, reviews, programs, interviews, and scripts. Phelan points out that performance scholarship often privileges the moment in which live performance takes place: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance.”<sup>42</sup> Phelan’s assessment of the impact of live, embodied performance absolutely informs my project, which examines events that by definition are fleeting, ephemeral, and temporary.

Nevertheless, my analysis also supports the idea that through salvage, replication, and documentation, past performances are recoverable – albeit as something else (Phelan’s “representations of representations”). Joseph Roach’s work on performance

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<sup>41</sup> I would also point to the critical and economic success of *Angels in America* (Part 1, 1990; Part II, 1992) and *Rent* (1994) as evidence of a different kind of theatrical response to AIDS.

<sup>42</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993) 146.

and cultural memory suggests that bodies and objects related to performance can retain meaning beyond their initial use. Roach argues, “beyond ostensibly inanimate effigies fashioned from wood or cloth there are more elusive but also more powerful effigies fashioned from flesh. Such effigies are made by performances. They consist of a set of actions that hold open a memory.”<sup>43</sup> In expanding upon Phelan and Roach, I seek the figurative ghost in the machine and hope to elicit queer meaning from performances both past and present.

By re-marking certain aspects of Shakespeare in queer performance, I produce queer narratives out of (often heterosexist) texts, play-texts, and performances, thereby facilitating a new signification of cultural memory. As Diana Taylor points out, “it is imperative to keep reexamining relationships between embodied performance and the production of knowledge.”<sup>44</sup> In writing about these performances, I am effectively producing new performances – Phelan’s “representations of representations.” According to Phelan,

To attempt to write about the undocumentable event of performance is to invoke the rules of the written document and thereby alter the event itself. . . It does no good, however, to simply refuse to write about performance because of this inescapable transformation. The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Joseph Roach, “History, Memory, Necrophilia,” in *The Ends of Performance*, ed. Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>44</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) xviii-xix. In this, I follow Taylor, who argues that, “performance also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze these events [civic obedience, gender, sexual identity] as performance. To understand these as performance suggests that performance also functions as an epistemology. Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing” (3).

<sup>45</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 148.

For Phelan, writing has the potential for being a performance in its own right, and her “challenge” is to write performatively. Joseph Grigely addresses this idea as well, suggesting that “literary work – be it poem, play, or letter to aunt Em – is an assemblage of texts, a polytext of seriated texts and versions,” and should be understood relationally to “text.”<sup>46</sup> He notes that “the work is not equivalent to the *sum* of its texts (which would create some kind of hybridized eclectic text), but instead is an ongoing – and infinite – manifestation of textual appearances, *whether those texts are authorized or not.*”<sup>47</sup> Drawing on Phelan, Roach, Taylor, and Grigely, I attempt to re-mark performance by engaging with “the performative possibilities of writing itself.” In this way, “performing queer” (as my title suggests) can create space for my argument as well as enable a subject position by presenting performances through the lens of queerness.

#### Defining Terms, Take 4: Performance, Archive, Repertoire

I employ three terms to classify the remnants of performance, or works, I analyze in this project: textual archive, video archive, and repertoire. Of course, the experience of working in an archive is necessarily different from attending a performance, and yet the difference is fundamental enough that I highlight it here. In noting the discrepancy, I defer to Taylor, who distinguishes “between the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials

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<sup>46</sup> Joseph Grigely, “The Textual Event” in *Textuality: Art, Theory, and Textual Criticism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 99. He expresses the relationship in the equation “ $W \rightarrow T_1, T_2, T_3 \dots T_N$ .”

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, (Grigely’s emphasis).

(i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual).”<sup>48</sup>

The textual archive, which includes textual traces of the performance, whether written or visual, plays an important role in subsequent chapters.<sup>49</sup> The textual archive encompasses those artifacts of performance that were present at the event itself, including programs, scripts, and interviews with directors, actors, dramaturges, or audience members. It also includes material mediated by sources outside the purview of the actual performance, such as drama critics and theater scholars. The textual repositories I utilized include the Scottish Theatre Archive, Shakespeare Centre Library/The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, and the Royal National Theatre, in addition to websites for the Queen’s Company, Propeller, Cheek by Jowl, Shakespeare’s Globe, as well as online reviews, fan-sites, and blogs.

A video archive provides different opportunities for analysis than does a textual one. While the moment of live performance is lost on video, a recording of the event helps suggest the dynamics of performance. And while a video record remains unchanging, immutable, and locked into the moment in which it was produced, it nonetheless provides an inkling of what happened in the performance, even if not a full appreciation. The most significant impact of a video archive is found in my chapter on

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<sup>48</sup> Taylor, 19 (Taylor’s emphasis).

<sup>49</sup> For example, when I cite a written review, whether published in print or posted online, I am accessing a text-based document. When I use a photograph from a performance to accentuate a point, or in an attempt to recover a moment in the event, I am drawing from a textual record that describes the action on stage. Early modern historians look at the Stationer’s Register, engravings, company lists, diary entries, and architectural records to draw conclusions about early modern drama; I utilize modern archives with the belief that, in the here and now, the majority of our cultural memory is constituted in negotiation with at least some form of preserved records, rather than live performance.

Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*, in which I base my argument in large part from viewing a video of the production at National Video Archive of Performance at the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre Collection.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, my use of repertoire underscores the importance of live, embodied performance in this dissertation, including all three productions of *Twelfth Night* analyzed in Chapter 4. Attending these events allowed me first-hand access to what I call flashes of queerness; moments when queer acts, desires, identities, and pleasures, become evident and apparent. This is not, however, to suggest that there is a universal consensus regarding meanings of such moments, or even a unified understanding of what the various productions attempted to accomplish. Repertoire refers to more than attendance at a performance; it also depends on individual experience, personal identity, lived history. Each of us has our own "repertoire." As Taylor explains,

I draw from my own repertoire for some of the material of this book: my participation in political events and performances and my experience of the attack on the World Trade Center. As a social actor, I try to be attentive to my own engagement and investment in the scenarios I describe. Some of the transfers I've been party to have taken place through live enactments and encounters: those at the Hemispheric Institute's encuentros, in public lectures, in classrooms, in activities I share with friends and colleagues.<sup>51</sup>

Like Taylor, the repertoire from which I draw is more expansive than watching Shakespeare on stage.<sup>52</sup> My repertoire includes my experiences as an actor, director, and

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<sup>50</sup> The Theatre Museum in Covent Garden closed in 2007, replaced by the V&A Theatre Collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington in March 2009. The tape I saw recorded a performance at the Albery Theatre on February 11, 1995 as part of the United Kingdom's National Video Archive of Performances.

<sup>51</sup> Taylor, 51-52.

<sup>52</sup> See also William H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*, ed. Gabrielle M. Spiegel (London and New

dramaturge – histories both professional and personal. It includes the time I spent bartending in gay clubs, dancing on Gay Pride floats, and protesting the lack of effective treatment for people living with HIV. It draws on discussions with friends and colleagues from a variety of backgrounds about theater, identity, and subjectivity. My repertoire comes from a lifetime of experience and observation.<sup>53</sup>

My use of repertoire as a conceptual category is enabled by Jan Kott's assertion that Shakespeare could be "our contemporary" and that performances could be meaningful in the context of the present-day.<sup>54</sup> A Polish theatrical director and performance theorist, Kott expressed a conviction that the times shape the text and that if a work (of literature, of art, of theater) is to endure, we must be able to filter it through the life experiences afforded by different times and social/cultural circumstances. For text-based works, this means that the images generated in the mind of their readers vary continuously. Theater, however, repeatedly reconstitutes text into productions, with the result that the same text continuously generates new works. From the 1960's onward, Kott's argument had a great influence on directors, and helped bring about a number of "concept" productions. There was a subsequent move among many critics to discredit such productions; however, without Kott, there would be no local Shakespeare – Kott's

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York: Routledge, 2005), 76-95. Sewell enunciates the idea of a historical "social actor" who produces culture (itself unstable, constantly produced and reproduced), by the performance and re-performance. The coded meanings of performances (and re-performances) are unsystematic, changeable, and the result of differing sociopolitical and ideological investments.

<sup>53</sup> This responds to the challenge of Pierre Bourdieu, who urged that more attention should be paid to the "particular conditions" and "independent...individual consciousnesses and wills...irreducible to their execution in practices or works (for example, language as code or cipher.)" See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 26.

<sup>54</sup> Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Anchor, 1966).

ideas enabled not just queer, but feminist, ethnic, indeed all *avant-garde* productions of Shakespeare.

My interest in the productions that I examine lies in their queer moments and in my pleasure in seeing queer desire enacted onstage. While desire is more complicated than a simple narcissistic whim, the role that desire plays in my inquiry is multifaceted. By proposing desire as the impulse for my critical gaze, I am indebted to Valerie Traub's *Desire and Anxiety*. In challenging a narrowly psychoanalytic understanding of desire, Traub postulates that desire is "a matter of both bodies and minds" and "implicated in interpretive networks, signifying systems, discursive fields."<sup>55</sup> Like Traub, I move beyond a strictly psychoanalytic reading of desire; instead, I maintain that desire reveals itself in physical and psychic ways, and that manifestations of desire indicate cultural and social frameworks.

When enacted on stage, desire becomes part of a communal viewing event that can engage with the erotic experiences of spectators. Recreating the subjective experience of looking, of course, is notoriously difficult. I attempt to cull such moments from review discourse, both popular and scholarly, as well as from my experience of sitting in audiences watching performances and audience reactions. Because desire can be fleeting and ephemeral (like performance), as well as acutely personal, whenever possible I back my claims for its presence with outside sources. I am committed to presenting instances where a homoerotic relationship is suggested, implied, and/or

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<sup>55</sup> Traub, *Desire and Anxiety*, 7. She also argues that desire is "substitutive, founded on a lack, and hence, always the desire of an other" (7).



presented, in order to articulate the sense of community that comes with shared experience – both onstage and off.

### Looking Gay

When I write about my observations of performances, I identify affective connections to looking practices; moreover, I use looking as a term to encompass my gaze and subjective critical position, as well as to access flashes of queerness in performances of Shakespeare's plays. I seek those aspects that resonate with me as a critic, reader, audience member, theater practitioner, and gay man, the moments that make performances connect with my experiences of all these. These flashes will take different forms, sparked by different moments in the productions. Some hinge on the signification and identification of queer referents, which include recognition of gay, lesbian, and queer political struggles (Gay Liberation, AIDS activism, the fight for marriage equality), iconic figures (Oscar Wilde), cultural phenomena (the "down low"), spaces of community (bathhouses), and artistic influences (drag, beefcake). They also include examples of gender and sexual dissidence that cross-gender casting enables. In this, I follow Alan Sinfield's advice to write from my own experience, even to the possible exclusion of other spectators. "Male gayness" runs through Sinfield's work because, as he contends, "intellectuals should work in their own subcultural

constituencies.”<sup>56</sup> As Sinfield suggests, identity invariably informs my critical perspective and practices.

However, in articulating affective connections to alternative ways of looking, I follow certain models provided by feminist film criticism. Mary Ann Doane, for example, grapples with the dilemma of inhabiting a female subject positioned within a system that both objectifies and excludes her. Doane argues that because the body of the woman is so frequently the object of the voyeuristic or fetishistic gaze in the cinema, “There is always a certain excessiveness, a difficulty associated with women who appropriate the gaze, who insist upon looking.”<sup>57</sup> In appropriating the heterosexist gaze, I similarly attempt to find a way to look from the outside in. On articulating her strategy of looking, B. Ruby Rich acknowledges, “My field of vision has become more generous. I find myself more willing to accept difference, not just in theoretical argument but in the countless minor negotiations of daily life in the culture industry.”<sup>58</sup> In aligning myself with feminist film critics, I do not suggest that a common goal binds us together; however, their articulation of social and political difference, and their desire to express that difference, informs my own project. I recognize, as well, that allying myself in this way is potentially problematic – my articulation of the “gaze” is arrived at second-hand

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Cultural Politics – Queer Reading* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), x.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Ann Doane, “Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator,” in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 27.

<sup>58</sup> B. Ruby Rich, *Chick Flicks: Theories and Memories of the Feminist Film Movement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 5. Rich goes on to offer, “I sincerely believe that the people who read *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (the academic journal where I have edited film and video reviews) and the people who mob the Sundance Film Festival (where I serve on the selection committee) have something to say to one another” (5).

and my contestation of assumptive heterosexuality is likewise filtered through feminist challenges to patriarchal privilege.

To clarify my subject position I look to the auteurs of New Queer Cinema. A movement and phrase first used by Rich, New Queer Cinema attained prominence at the same time as queer theory in the academy and Queer Nation activism in the streets.<sup>59</sup>

While the works Rich identifies with New Queer Cinema had few visual or plot referents in common, their directors shared an “irreverent” and “energetic” attitude, which Rich playfully called “Homo Pomo,” and the films featured protagonists whom Michele Aaron described as “proudly defiant.”<sup>60</sup> These filmmakers challenged the supposition of a

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<sup>59</sup> B. Ruby Rich, “New Queer Cinema,” *Sight and Sound* 2.5 (1992): 32. For New Queer Cinema’s lasting effect on film, see also B. Ruby Rich, “Queer and Present Danger,” *Sight and Sound* 10.3 (2002): 22-25.

<sup>60</sup> Michele Aaron, “New Queer Cinema: An Introduction,” in *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michele Aaron (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 3. This movement demonstrated that queer filmmakers and the queer images they produce could be radical, popular, and profitable. The movement began at the Sundance Film Festival in 1991 and 1992 with three films: *Paris is Burning* (Jenny Livingston, 1990), *Poison* (Todd Haynes, 1991), and *Swoon* (Tom Kalin, 1992). However, the term quickly came to encompass a diverse group of artists and their work, including a queer homage to Marlowe’s *Edward II* (Derek Jarman, 1991) and the *Henry IV* inflected *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991). This fluidity also influences my way of looking as there is no set generic strategy by which these filmmakers challenge the assumption of heteronormativity; rather, they rely on multiple methodologies for their interventions. For example, New Queer Cinema provides a voice for persons marginalized by western popular culture with a range of representation that extends beyond that typically associated with the lesbian and gay community. The protagonists of *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus van Sant, 1991) are teenaged hustlers while *Paris Is Burning* (Jenny Livingston, 1990) focuses on transgender African-American and Hispanic drag ball culture in New York City. These films are unapologetic about their protagonist’s faults and crimes, as demonstrated in the valorization of HIV positive gay gunslingers on a killing spree in *The Living End* (Greg Araki, 1992) and the explicitly sexual bond between thrill killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb in *Swoon* (Tom Kalin, 1992). New Queer Cinema is also trans-historical and defies the sanctity of the (heterosexist, homophobic) past. *The Hours and Times* (Christopher Münch, 1991) queers the Beatles by eroticizing John Lennon’s relationship with Brian Epstein, while *Edward II* portrays Edward’s relationship with Piers Gaveston amidst clashes between ACT UP activists and right wing religious zealots, freely mixing images from medieval and post-modern England. In this genre, filmmakers frequently defy and mix cinematic conventions, with regard to form, content, and genre. *Zero Patience* (John Greyson, 1993) surprisingly pairs the Movie Musical with AIDS. *My Own Private Idaho* features a homeless, gay Falstaff-figure spouting Shakespearean verse in 1990s Portland, Oregon. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, some of these films deny the reality and sanctity of death in general, but primarily as represented by HIV/AIDS. The first victim to die from AIDS comes back to life in *Zero*

heterosexual spectator in the early 1990s, leading Richard Dyer to posit that the formulation of “queer” at this time (specifically in cultural context) represented a fluidity of identity (whereas it previously signified an “exclusive and fixed sexuality”).<sup>61</sup> As Rich and Dyer suggests, these cinematographers rejected assumptive heterosexism, and instead presented more encompassing notions of subjectivity. Most importantly, these filmmakers provided a point of view for lesbians and gay men that hadn’t been previously expressed, in films that dealt openly, and even aggressively, with queer culture, politics, and identity. New Queer Cinema’s films were made specifically for lesbian and gay audiences, and its images provide a sort of template for the flashes of identification I described previously. Instead of feeling as outsiders forced to decipher the code to recognize instances of queerness, lesbian and gay viewers of these films were presented with a visual/aural language that they could understand, a queer argot with representations to which they might connect.

### Queer Historicism

Shakespeare scholars, particularly the new historicists, have sought to contextualize literature through the study of history with the belief that we can better understand the literary through an awareness of the historical culture that produced it. As Stephen Greenblatt famously admitted, “I began with a desire to speak with the dead.”<sup>62</sup>

Jean E. Howard clarifies, “the ideological significance and the historical situation of

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*Patience*, and in *The Living End*, the diagnosis of HIV becomes a mechanism which liberates the protagonists rather than kills them.

<sup>61</sup> Richard Dyer, *The Culture of Queers*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.

<sup>62</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

those representations we label literary can only be understood when looked at in relation to other sorts of contemporaneous representations and discursive practices.”<sup>63</sup> Like the new historicists, my analysis treats the literary as indicative of larger social and cultural issues. A new historicist might read *Hamlet* and relate an interpretive problem (such as why Hamlet doesn’t kill Claudius as he prays) to cultural-historical problems (such as contemporaneous debates about purgatory, transubstantiation, and salvation, in addition to anxieties about what constituted legitimacy in the church, the monarchy, and succession to the throne).

Instead, I examine an interpretive or performative strategy, such as costuming (for example, dressing Laertes and Hamlet in jockstraps for their penultimate fight in the Citz’ 1970 production) or allusions to queer practices (such as Jaques’ attempts to cottage – or, pick up men for sex in public places – in Cheek by Jowl’s *As You Like It*). In turn, I relate the strategy to more recent, more local cultural-historical phenomena (such as the rise of Gay Liberation in the advent of the Stonewall Riots, the decriminalization of male homosexuality in the UK, and the declassification of homosexuality as a curable pathology.) In suggesting an alternative way of looking at Shakespeare, as a producer of culture in the here and now, I break with New Historicists even while I employ some of their analytic techniques.

Though Shakespeare’s plays are artifacts of early modern culture, as Howard suggests, they remain in almost constant repertory, thereby becoming signifiers of contemporary culture. Focusing on what Shakespeare’s plays might have meant to an

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<sup>63</sup> Jean E. Howard, “The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies,” *English Literary Renaissance* 16.1 (1986): 42.

early modern audience importantly helps to explain the literary and historical aspects of his work. Yet too often, these assumptions fail to account for the tangible impact of performance in the context of the present. In seeking to unpack the meaning of performance in the present, my methodology follows presentism, as advocated by Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, who desire, in (supposed) contradiction to the new historicists, “to talk with the living.”<sup>64</sup> In arguing for presentism’s relevance, Grady and Hawkes point out, “we can never, finally, evade the present. And if it’s always and only the present that makes the past speak, it speaks always and only to – and about – ourselves.”<sup>65</sup> Additionally, for Ewan Fernie, presentism offers “a deliberate strategy of interpreting texts in relation to current affairs.”<sup>66</sup> Embracing temporal displacement allows a critic to negotiate the early modern past, the more recent past, and the here-and-now simultaneously.<sup>67</sup> Such a strategy does not discount the past, but its emphasis is on accounting for the present.

Thus, Shakespeare’s plays in modern performance have the unique ability to reach across the early modern, the modern, and the postmodern. According to Madhavi Menon, this phenomenon is unique to Shakespeare, who exemplifies “the past-in-the-

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<sup>64</sup> Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes, “Introduction: Presenting Presentism,” in *Presentist Shakespeares*, ed. Hugh Grady and Terence Hawkes (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 4. See also, Terence Hawkes, *Shakespeare in the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Ewan Fernie, “The Last Act: Presentism, Spirituality and the Politics of *Hamlet*,” in *Spiritual Shakespeares*, ed. Ewan Fernie (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 186. See also, Ewan Fernie, “Shakespeare and the Prospect of Presentism,” *Shakespeare Survey* 58 (2005): 169-184, and “Dollimore’s Challenge,” *Shakespeare Studies* 35 (2007): 133-157.

<sup>67</sup> I should note that these self-proclaimed presentists are following in the wake of cultural materialists, certain feminists, and many early modern queer scholars. E.g. Jonathan Goldberg, Stephen Orgel, Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore, Valerie Traub, Richard Rambuss, and Jeffrey Masten – to name but a few. See other notes for bibliographic references.

present, an old author generating new jobs.”<sup>68</sup> Menon posits that Shakespeare’s ability to convey multiple meanings “militates against fixity, and exemplifies what it means to cross time and chronology and history. This crossing not only punctures the idea of a single Shakespeare, but...it deploys queerness against the canon, and suggests a homohistory to counter the hegemony of the hetero.”<sup>69</sup> This impulse not only disrupts heteronormative history, it creates the possibility to touch the past and present at the same time. Carolyn Dinshaw suggests that because so much of queer history remains unwritten, queer historians, activists, and critics must learn to transit across different centuries and literary genres in order to write their own queer history.<sup>70</sup> While the organizational structure of my dissertation tends to privilege sequential history by focusing on three periods of history as distinct (the 1970s, the 1990s, the 2000s), I nonetheless connect these periods through strategies of Shakespearean performance, and strive to touch these productions in the past and the present simultaneously.

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<sup>68</sup> Madhavi Menon, *Unhistorical Shakespeare: Queer Theory in Shakespearean Literature and Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Appropriately, Dinshaw argues for Margery Kempe, a medieval mystic and disruptive figure, as queer. Dinshaw explains, “When we look at, not through, the mother wearing the clothes of a virgin, and when we listen to her own words about her experience as well, we perceive a creature that itself is not clearly categorizable in her community’s bourgeois heteronormative terms.... We perceive a creature whose body does not fit her desires. We perceive, that is, a queer.” Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 149. Dinshaw’s articulation of Margery Kemp’s queer life “allows us to focus not only on individual acts of sex/gender manipulation, but on the relationship between such acts and other kinds of social disorder in Margery’s narrative” (152). In a similar move, Neil Bartlett appropriates Oscar Wilde as a queer late twentieth century contemporary, “The picture wasn’t complete. Bits were obviously and intriguingly missing. Some characters had been painted out, or rather had never been painted in... We never get to see the faces, and of course it’s the *faces* that I want to see.” Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1988), 28-29. Alternately antagonistic and loving, Bartlett seeks the messy, the unsanitary, and the personal and sets out to fill in the spaces traditionally left empty by biographers.

## Performing Shakespeare Queer

In the summer of 1994, I played Tybalt in Shakespeare in Santa Fe's production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Director Steve Schwartz cast me as the "king of cats" specifically for the "aura of dangerous sexuality" he said that I brought to the role. While the accuracy of Steve's observation is debatable, my Tybalt was a badass, strutting across the stage with a lethal combination of self-assurance and passion. I looked like a badass too, wearing a tight leather doublet and codpiece, colored red and black to match the hose, and completed with black jackboots. My blouse was silver brocade, but it garnered hardly any attention because of the size of the enormous red and black leather codpiece the costume designer constructed.

In my characterization, Tybalt's excessive fire sprang not so much from wounded family honor as from a capacious sexual desire metonymized by that huge codpiece. Tybalt's outward demeanor actually masked a desire for Mercutio that he didn't fully understand, but that he knew was *verboten*. My Tybalt was also hot for Juliet and amorously pursued by Lady Capulet – both of which complicate an easy assignment of sexual identity by way of object of desire and signifier. Though the production was set in Renaissance Italy, my Tybalt enacted a post-modern sexual identity: even if he wasn't specifically gay, Tybalt was certainly aware that his principal sexual attraction was to Mercutio. This is what Declan Donnellan refers to as the actor's "invisible work" – things an actor does to prepare but that might not register to the audience.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "Someone asked Picasso how long it took him to produce those 'few lines'. Picasso answered: 'Oh, about 40 years.' Those 40 years are like the actor's invisible work. They are not explicit in a drawing that took 40 seconds to complete, but those 40 years breathe invisibly." See Declan Donnellan, *The Actor and the Target* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2002), 109.



The decision to approach Tybalt this way was more than just an actor's fancy. My choices as Tybalt arose from the rehearsal process and the on-stage chemistry between my character and Mercutio; however, they were also grounded in the text. As Tybalt, I was expressly aware of the transgressive nature of my desire for Mercutio, which was first piqued during the party scene (I.v). My motivation for Tybalt's outrage at finding Romeo at a Capulet event sprang from Tybalt's jealousy at his perception of Romeo's closeness to Mercutio – every night Mercutio would cross to tousle Romeo's hair as I said, "This, by his voice, should be a Montague" (I.v.51). This infuriated me and motivated my next line, "Fetch me my rapier, boy" (52). By the time I left the party, muttering about trembling flesh converting to "bitt' rest gall," my illicit feelings for Mercutio spilled into unfettered aggression towards Romeo (89). Later, my Tybalt flirted with Mercutio throughout the dialogue that precedes their fight, with an erotic subtext to the charge, "Mercutio, thou *consort'st* with Romeo" (III.i.40). "I am for you" (83) was an excited admission rather than a cool threat, and I delivered the line with a wink and a smile.

This interaction was helped by the combat master, who choreographed a fight that played out like an extended tango rather than a street brawl. There was a slow deliberation to our duel, equally playful and dangerous. There was even a moment when we both lost our épées and daggers, so we rolled around on the ground performing wrestling moves. The apex of the fight came when Mercutio kissed me as I pinned him to the ground, thus stunning me and allowing him to recover his rapier. The other characters on-stage (and the audience) laughed at Mercutio's tactic, which in turn escalated the fight to another level. Mercutio's subsequent death was an unexpected

accident that completely unhinged my Tybalt, thus making him vulnerable to a lethal attack by a novice like Romeo.

The fight scene, with its phallic swordplay, sweating, thrusting, and grappling on the ground, was very much akin to a sexual encounter, at least in my experience of performing it. Is this something the audience picked up? With an estimated attendance that summer of 10,000 people (roughly a sixth of Santa Fe's population) in 32 performances in July and August, it seems likely that someone must have noticed, but I cannot say for sure. For my part, upon revisiting a videotape of the performance years later, I found myself wondering why Tybalt didn't just return Mercutio's kiss and end the scene there.

This performance exemplifies the analytical process I undertake in this project. I study these productions not primarily as artifacts of the culture in which they were conceived originally, but as products of the culture that we live in today. The anecdote also introduces the theoretical questions I grapple with in the project. There is a tension between "gay" and "queer," for instance, in my character choices and identity. At the time, based on Tybalt's sexual attraction to Mercutio, I concluded that my character was gay. In retrospect, that signification is accurate (albeit anachronistic) in terms of my motivation as an actor, but fails to account adequately for the effect of that characterization within Verona (on stage) and Santa Fe (in the audience).

Of course, my experience playing Tybalt is necessarily different from that of the audience watching the performance, or even of another actor playing a different character on-stage. There are significant differences between acting in a play and watching a performance. Just as each performance is ephemeral, so too is each reaction to a

performance unique. In describing events that occur, as when I wrestled with Mercutio, I am speaking simply for myself – if one were to ask Scott Thompson who played Mercutio, or Steven Schwartz who directed the show, or any audience member to describe the event of Tybalt and Mercutio’s fatal fight, there would be a variety of responses. Their description of events would likely differ from mine – and that is expected and entirely appropriate. My labor is not to catalog endless possibilities enabled by an infinite number of encounters with the works represented in this project, but to place my observations of productions and the aesthetics they employ within the context of Shakespearean performance, theater studies, and queer theater history. Accordingly, I offer a study of the relationship between theater (as enacted in cultural practices) and gay cultural forms.

#### Subsequent Chapters

The title of this project “Performing Queer Shakespeare” and the name of this chapter “How to Perform Shakespeare Queer” could be taken to set up to mutually exclusive understandings. “Performing Queer Shakespeare” assumes that Shakespearean drama is already queer, and that the object of analysis is the performance strategies dedicated to demonstrating that fact; this title is self-consciously political. “How to Perform Shakespeare Queer,” conversely, assumes that it is specifically *in performance* that Shakespeare’s plays are queered; while this also suggests a political stance, but I am making claims for specific moments of queerness. Both of these insights inform my analysis of the productions to follow. Taken as a whole, this dissertation proceeds from the supposition that specific moments in several plays by Shakespeare are, as written,

potentially or literally queer; at the same time, I analyze the ways and means by which this queerness has been identified, exploited, and celebrated – or additional moments of queerness created – when Shakespeare is performed on stage.

My guiding assumption depends on and extends the scholarship of those critics who first argued for the existence of homoeroticism and/or queerness in the plays of Shakespeare and other early modern dramatists: Jonathan Goldberg, Stephen Orgel, Bruce Smith, Jeffrey Masten, Mario DiGangi, and Valerie Traub. However, this project deviates from the predominantly historicist ways in which these scholars have argued for a queer Shakespeare; few, if any, of these scholars concern themselves with contemporary performance, preferring instead to situate the queerness of Shakespeare within early modern cultural understandings and practices. With this historical grounding as my analytical base, I have turned my focus, instead, to the ways in which contemporary cultural performances (drag, cruising, cottaging, etc.) can be used to open these plays to further queer interrogation and appreciation. Because this chapter is contextualized by my own first-hand experience with performing Shakespeare, specifically the deliberation with which my own performance brought queerness to *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*, “queer” modifies “performance” in the chapter, even as the project as a whole contributes to a further elucidation of the ways in which Shakespearean drama is already queer. These two understandings are in tension, but not in contradiction: both the plays and the performances I examine contain flashes of queerness.

My next chapter, “Archival Remains and the Queer Roots of Citz’ Shakespeare,” examines the Citizen’s Theatre Company’s productions of Shakespeare in the early 1970s

and places them within the context of gay liberation, non-conformity, and a community's embrace of local Shakespeare. The Citizen's style of Shakespeare performance includes cutting and rearranging the plays drastically, lots of nudity, the suggestion of sexual fluidity, and oftentimes gender-swapping. Bringing the body of the actor into the act of reading prompt-books, scripts, photos, and reviews of Citz' productions, I read many of the bodies I find in the textual archive as queer. Because the surviving traces of these Citz's productions are textual, my project becomes an exercise in literal as well as figurative reading, one that crosses historical boundaries from the early modern period to the early 1970s to the present day. By placing the Citz' and its productions within the context of queer theater and gay history, this chapter offers one of the first detailed analyses of this significant, yet often overlooked, theater companies.

In "Looking Queer: Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*," I examine that company's all-male production of *As You Like It* as emblematic of the rise of a queer political movement and as a response to comedy's normative generic constraints, which were challenged by queer scholars beginning in the 1980s. I use the aesthetics I developed in discussing the Citz' to chart connections with and deviations from previous cross-gendered, queer productions of Shakespeare. In considering this production in relation to queer theater history and the AIDS plays of the 1980s, I conjecture that when this production posits Jaques as a queer figure, it likewise connects him with a time when AIDS was decimating the gay community and homophobic violence was on the rise. I also claim that Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* maintains a distinct position as the forerunner of the recent return to all-male (and foray into all-female) Shakespeare, in which companies regularly stage plays with partially or fully cross-gender casts.

Shakespeare's Globe, Cheek by Jowl, and Propeller present sometimes contrasting all-male productions of *Twelfth Night* in the new millennium; yet within this multiplicity of approaches, they come to represent queer desire on-stage, albeit by exploiting different scenes of Shakespeare's drama. In "Queering (or Not) All-Male Productions of *Twelfth Night*," I explore the recent vogue for cross-gender performance in several post-millennial productions of *Twelfth Night*: Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (2002), Cheek by Jowl for the Chekhov International Theatre Festival (2003), and Propeller (2006). This chapter argues for the implications and payoff of flashes of queer identification – as well as the recognition that sometimes there simply is no queer spark. It argues not for the universality of such a theatrical experience, but for the importance of self-reflective observation of (in this case) *Twelfth Night*, with an eye to the theatrical strategies previously attempted by the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl. These queer aesthetics include both non-scripted and textual events, but they allow for the possibility of queer identification and pleasure.

## Chapter Two:

### The Queer Roots of Citz' Shakespeare

In a black and white photograph from Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre Company's (or Citz') 1972 production of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra appears lost in ecstasy (see figure 2.1). She stands erect and offers herself to the unseen audience with eyes shut, mouth agape, head rolled back, and arms spread wide. She wears a long, dark, translucent skirt accented with patterns (perhaps in gold-leaf), tied loosely around her slender waist. Dozens of beaded necklaces dangle from her neck, with matching bracelets and bands covering her arms from wrist to shoulder. Provocatively, this Cleopatra wears no blouse, instead proudly displaying a bare chest, with well-defined pectoral muscles, muscular shoulders, and tiny, pert nipples. Finally, Cleopatra's costume reveals the slightest trail of stomach hair, extending from below flat, chiseled abdominals down to the pubic region. A muscular chest and pubic trail should not be a complete surprise though, as Jonathan Kent (a male actor) played Cleopatra in the Citz's production.

The decision to present an obviously male actor in role previously played by such iconic female stars as Theda Bara, Vivien Leigh, and Elizabeth Taylor, emblemizes the approach of the Citizens' Theatre to Shakespeare: evocative, sexy, and transgressive, often at the same time. With his appointment as company manger in 1969, Giles Havergal transformed the Citz' into a subversive and controversial company that took an

edgy approach to classical plays.<sup>1</sup> As its manifesto of 1945 indicates, the Citz' had always intended to be "a citizens' theatre in the fullest sense of the term. Established to make Glasgow independent from London for its dramatic supplies, it produced plays which the Glasgow playgoers would otherwise not have the opportunity of seeing."<sup>2</sup> Starting in 1969 with the arrival of Havergal and director/designer Philip Prowse, the Citizens' Theatre began to live up to that creed with innovative play selection and a style of performance that emphasized visual impact and visceral reaction. The "triumvirate" of Havergal, Prowse, and director/translator Robert David MacDonald (who arrived in 1971) remained at the Citizens' until 2003. They frequently included early modern plays, and particularly Shakespeare, as part of their repertoire.<sup>3</sup> Even today, the Citz' is still producing Shakespeare, although under different management. There are decades of additional productions I might have considered; however, my primary interest lies in production strategies practiced in the early years of the triumvirate, until around 1975, when the company first began to develop what would become known as Citz' style.

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<sup>1</sup> The Royal Princess Theatre was built in 1878, just south of the River Clyde in a part of Glasgow known as the Gorbals: on September 11, 1945, it was renamed the Citizens' Theatre. Scottish theatrical luminary James Birdie ran the company for decades. By the 1960s, however, the Citizens' fell upon hard times and seemed likely to close. In an attempt to revitalize the theatre and its associated Citizens' Theatre Company, the board of directors hired director Giles Havergal to manage the theatre.

<sup>2</sup> "Company History," Citizens' Theatre of Glasgow, [http://www.citz.co.uk/?node\\_id=1.3.1](http://www.citz.co.uk/?node_id=1.3.1) (accessed February 24, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Citizen's productions of early modern plays from 1969 through 2003 include: *Hamlet* (1970), *Titus Andronicus* (1971), *Twelfth Night* (1971), *The White Devil* (1971), *Timon of Athens* (1972), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972), *Lear* (1972), *Tamburlaine* (1972-3), *Troilus and Cressida* (1973), *Arden of Faversham* (1974), *The Taming of the Shrew* (1974), *Macbeth* (1974), *Coriolanus* (1974), *Romeo and Juliet* (1975), *The Duchess of Malfi* (1975), *The Changeling* (1976), *The Spanish Tragedy* (1978), *Macbeth* (1979), *The Maid's Tragedy* (1979), *The Massacre at Paris* (1981), *Hamlet* (1981), *The Roman Actor* (1982), *The Merchant of Venice* (1983), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1988), *Richard III* (1988), *Macbeth* (1989), *Romeo and Juliet* (1993), *Women Beware Women* (1995), *Hamlet* (1996), *Macbeth* (1998), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2001).



These stylistic elements significantly and repeatedly reference figures, aspects, objects, and spaces associated with gay culture and community.

My intention is not to recreate a performance literally, but to recover those aspects of Citz' productions of Shakespeare's plays that resonate with queer meaning now, decades after they first took place.<sup>4</sup> However, I do not provide a critique of Citz' performance or a conventional Citizens' Theater history, either of which would likely include interviews with original participants and/or observers, and focus largely on the Citz's impact in the historical past.<sup>5</sup> Instead, my analysis focuses on certain performance strategies, as culled from photos, and I place Citz' Shakespeare in the context of gay culture, demonstrating how the Citizens' strategies develop a queer theatrical aesthetic.<sup>6</sup> I thus seek to contribute to a history of queer Shakespeare in performance.

I analyze photographs in relation to the Citz's use of four social and historical referents: Shakespeare as an icon, gay cultural practices, spaces of gay community, and gay objects/commodities. These signifiers, I argue, often function concurrently and undergo a process of appropriation and re-branding by the Citz', which then recycles the referents as part of its "house style." The "Citz' style," which I will discuss at greater length in a moment, developed in the early 1970s after the arrival of three youthful artistic directors, and is typified by young actors, outrageous actions, raw sexuality,

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<sup>4</sup> I use "queer" here to suggest non-normative sex gender practices, breaking the gender binary, and a subject position.

<sup>5</sup> Such histories already exist. See Michael Coveney, *The Citz: 21 Years of the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre* (London: Nick Hern Books, 1990) and Cordelia Oliver, *Magic in the Gorbals: Cordelia Oliver's Personal Record of the Citizens' Theatre* (Ellon, Aberdeenshire: Northern Books from Famedram, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> I use "aesthetics" to indicate the choices made by the designers, directors, dramaturges, actors, and other theater practitioners; my use of the term neither relies on nor refers to axiology and the philosophy of art as theorized by Kant, Schiller, Hegel, Adorno, and others.

irreverent tone, and frenetic energy. The Citz' style, however, also is significantly contingent on its appropriation of gay cultural forms.

The use of cultural appropriation in Shakespeare – or the appropriating of Shakespeare for cultural performance – has assumed many forms, and often involves taking literary or dramaturgical elements and transposing them to another context. In some instances, appropriation and re-signification might refer to changing characters or the endings of Shakespeare's plays, a common practice from the 17th century to today.<sup>7</sup> The process of appropriation, however, can also include indirect referents such as Jane Smiley's "remembrance" of *King Lear* in *A Thousand Acres* and Robert Sawyer's articulation of Robert Browning's tradition of "Shakespeareanization."<sup>8</sup> Both direct and indirect appropriation utilize some aspect of Shakespeare, either as a literary tradition or cultural figure, which they then re-configure and re-circulate in culture as something new.

According to Christy Desmet:

The word "appropriation" implies an exchange, either the theft of something valuable (such as property or ideas) or a gift, the allocation of resources for a worthy cause (such as legislative appropriation of funds for a new school). Something happens when Shakespeare is appropriated, and

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, John Dryden and William Davenant's 1667 reworking of *The Tempest*, most often referred to by its subtitle *The Enchanted Island*. Dryden and Davenant supply Miranda with a sister, who is her mirror image, in Dorinda. As a counterpart to these two women who have never seen a man, Davenant and Dryden also invent a man who has never seen a woman, Hippolito. Prospero (played by an actress in this version) keeps Hippolito as a prisoner in a separate part of the island. Hippolito dies in a duel with Ferdinand, Ariel magically reanimates his dead body, and he marries a besotted Dorinda. For the most part, Miranda, Dorinda, and Hippolito all share the same New World sensibility paired with a sense of Old World knowledge that Miranda manifests in Shakespeare's original play.

<sup>8</sup> See Caroline Cakebread, "Remembering *King Lear* in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*," in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 85-102; Robert Sawyer, "The Shakespeareanization of Robert Browning," in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 142-159. "Shakespeareanization" is Sawyer's term to describe how Browning self-consciously constructed a literary identity based on Shakespeare's cultural importance.

both the subject (author) and object (Shakespeare) are changed in the process.<sup>9</sup>

I share Desmet's interest in the manner in which "Shakespeare" (as both subject and object) changes with appropriation, yet I also expand her depiction to include the ways that the Citz' alludes to specific aspects of gay culture and re-articulates them as aesthetics of its performed Shakespeare. These recycled aesthetics (including gay icons, radical drag, bathhouse settings, and beefcake magazines) tend to rely on both commonly-held knowledge and local knowledge that a viewer already possesses; however, without a full understanding of the specific cultural citation, the allusion might appear merely as a decorative device. Thus, appropriating queer referents is reliant upon a language, a gay "argot," that is fully comprehensible only to those who are "in the know."

An understanding of this local patois is neither binding nor essential, nor is mine the only way to interpret Citz' photos and productions. Rather, by uncovering some of the ways in which Citz' productions traffic in gay iconography, I elucidate the difference between a gut reaction to apparent allusions to homosexuality on stage and the local knowledge necessary to decode the expressly queer content intended for those who might welcome or appreciate such representations on stage. Both unenthusiastic and positive responses were regular, as evidenced in negative theatrical reviews and horrified letters to the editor, and in anecdotal accounts of teenagers cheering excitedly at the close of

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<sup>9</sup> Christy Desmet, "Introduction," in *Shakespeare and Appropriation*, ed. Christy Desmet and Robert Sawyer (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 4. Desmet goes on: "Discussion of appropriation as an aesthetic phenomenon raises a question of individual agency and therefore demands a theory of textual relation. While authors themselves often deny literary influences, insisting on a pragmatic approach to literary relations, just evoking the term 'appropriation' forces us to consider 'where we stand' theoretically in relation to the signifier 'Shakespeare'" (4).

productions otherwise savaged by critics. The ability to understand local knowledge requires an understanding of context; for those not already “in the know,” it draws on the work of cultural anthropologists, linguists, and lexicographers, scholars who have deciphered gay vernacular and noted the ways in which this historically oppressed minority has formed communities. In compiling his “dictionary of homophile cant,” Bruce Rodgers, for example, conducted interviews with “hundreds of informants...sought out in bars, steam baths, dance halls, public johns, and on street corners.”<sup>10</sup> Connecting community spaces, culture, and language, Rodgers argues, “Slang is secretive, a form of protest and an expression of social recognition. Secret, because it leaves outsiders where they usually are. Yet this secretiveness is not restrictive or snobbery; anyone interested can break the code.”<sup>11</sup> William L. Leap extends Rodgers’s conceptualization, seeking:

[T]o explore some of the ways in which gay men in the United States use English in everyday life...I am interested in the stereotypic varieties of Gay English: for example, the catty, bitchy dialogue associated with Matt Crowley’s *Boys in the Band*; the self-absorbed linguistic play during “cruising”; and the code words that confirm gay identity during informal conversations between strangers in public places.<sup>12</sup>

For Leap, the explication of “Gay English” involves notions of action, place, and audience, and he suggests ways in which coded language builds community. As Paul Baker points out, “A single word of gay slang can include some people and exclude others...It can protect the innocent who don’t understand the word, or exploit them by

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<sup>10</sup> Bruce Rodgers, *The Queen’s Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972), 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> William L. Leap, *Word’s Out: Gay Men’s English* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), xi.

withholding information.”<sup>13</sup> These examples all point to the way that gay men and lesbians have used language as a defining component of community, with communication, whether verbal or gestural, either including or excluding some onlookers from those constructed communities.<sup>14</sup>

My recognition of the queer context for the Citizens’ Theatre builds on the work of previous critics. Laurence Senelick argues for the Citz’ as an antecedent to post-millennial queer theater and identifies it as one of many “queer roots” of theater.<sup>15</sup> Senelick notes, however, that the Citz’ made “no deliberate attempt to establish a queer theater. Although a play might occasionally have a gay theme...it was the sensibility of the makers dictating style and substance that made the difference.”<sup>16</sup> For Senelick, dramaturgical choices can signify a production as queer and the Citz’ signature style emblemizes “queer theater”:

These were outspoken plays of “blood and glitter,” strong passions and mouth-filling language, that also packed an intellectual punch. The acting

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Baker, *Fantabulosa: A Dictionary of Polari and Gay Slang* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), ix.

<sup>14</sup> See also, among others, James W. Chesebro, ed., *Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1981); Judy Grahn, *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, revised and updated 1990); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Donald F. Reuter, *Gaydar: The Ultimate Insider Guide to the Gay Sixth Sense* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002); William L. Leap and Tom Boellstorff, *Speaking in Queer Tongues: Globalization and Gay Language* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>15</sup> Laurence Senelick, “The Queer Root of Theatre,” in *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theatre*, ed. Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002), 21. Senelick defines queer theater provisionally: “To speak in general terms, queer theater is grounded in and expressive of unorthodox sexuality or gender identity, antiestablishment and confrontational in tone, experimental and unconventional in format, with stronger links to performance art and what the Germans call *Kleinkunst*, that is, revue, cabaret, and variety, than to traditional forms of drama” (21). Other Senelick’s forerunners of queer theater include (but are not limited to) Japanese *Kabuki*, Alfred Jarry’s *Ubu Roi*, early modern playwrights John Lyly and Christopher Marlowe, and Russian poet Mikhail Kuzmin.

<sup>16</sup> Senelick, “Queer Root,” 35. Senelick continues: “The three directors made no bones about satisfying their own tastes and aesthetic convictions in their choices, and these proved more challenging and more elegantly presented than their counterparts elsewhere” (35).

company was polymorphous, energetic, and under thirty, making up in raw vitality and sexual magnetism what it lacked in finesse.... Attractive bodies were often displayed nude or nearly so, and cross-gender casting was common at a time when it could be seen in Britain only in Christmas pantomime.<sup>17</sup>

However, for Senelick, the queerest move the Citz' makes is to set *Woyzeck* in a bathhouse, turning the title character into a "sexual outlaw." The Citz' approach to Shakespeare, thus, offers no more appreciably queer significance than the company's approach to Wilde, Shaw, or Brecht.

Similarly, director, playwright, and queer activist Neil Bartlett calls the Citizens' Theatre "quintessentially queer", citing the Citz' as one of the principal inspirations for his own conception of queer theater.<sup>18</sup> The Citz' influence on Bartlett's work is especially evident in his recent provocative cross-gender cast productions of early modern plays, including *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (American Repertory Theatre, 2005), *Twelfth Night* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2007), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2008). Yet, while he identifies his own work as queer, Bartlett also points out that the Citz' would have resisted such a label, because they were not intentionally endorsing a "queer theatre" – rather, the Citizens' Company would have imagined that it was simply producing "theatre" without any additional qualifier.

Adrienne Scullion, on the other hand, never calls the Citz' work "queer," but does explicitly cite its approach to Shakespeare as indicative of Citz' style. Scullion notes that in the early 1970s, "audiences were introduced to a new visually stimulating world of bold theatre design, challenging directorial choices and daring dramaturgical

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> "Past, Present, Performance: Queer History and Contemporary Theatre," a panel sponsored by the Humanities Institute at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, September 27, 2005.

intervention. Plays were edited, settings were re-imagined and productions pushed at boundaries in a manner hitherto unknown in Scottish theatre.”<sup>19</sup> These dramaturgical interventions include the same strategies Senelick and Bartlett call queer: cross-gender casting, nudity, sexual energy, and a coarse acting style. Scullion adds that “it was, for a time at least, in the production of plays by Shakespeare that the Citizens’ Company was at its most unfamiliar and audacious and experimental and the reviewers at their most outraged and indignant and appalled.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, academic and theatrical discourses in circulation around the Citz’ have considered it as part of a queer theatrical tradition or as part of the history of Shakespeare in Scotland, but never both of these at once.

By bringing these strands of thought together, I argue for the Citz’ as one of the roots of contemporary queer Shakespeare. My analysis places the Citz’ in the context of queer theater by reading its allusions to gay icons of the early 1970s as intrinsically part of its strategies of performing Shakespeare. I draw from literary studies, theatre history, and queer studies by considering three tragedies (*Hamlet*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Titus Andronicus*) as well as a “problem comedy” (*Troilus and Cressida*) in order to reorient traditional criticism of cross-gendered and queer theater, which is often limited to the genre of transvestite comedy.<sup>21</sup> What makes Shakespeare queer, I argue, is the incorporation of specific elements of gay and lesbian culture and their re-signification as

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<sup>19</sup> Adrienne Scullion, “Citz’ Scotland Where it Did?: Shakespeare in Production at the Citizens’ Theatre, Glasgow, 1970-1974,” in *Shakespeare in Scotland*, ed. Willy Maley and Andrew Murphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 173.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> In transvestite comedies, a female character disguises herself as a male and woos her intended mate. *As You Like It* (1599-1600), *Twelfth Night* (1601-02), and *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-98) are Shakespeare’s transvestite comedies, but others include John Lyly’s *Gallathea* (1585-91), Ben Jonson’s *Epicoene* (1609), and Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton’s *The Roaring Girl* (1607-10).

production strategies – strategies which will be appropriated and extended by theater companies working in the wake of the Citz’. By deciphering the signs and significations that substantiate the appropriation of gay and lesbian emblems as aesthetics of Shakespearean performance, I will offer the opportunity to look at Shakespeare through queer eyes.

### Material Afterlives

Because I have seen performances of the plays I address elsewhere in this project, my analyses of those works rely on my observations of enacted events; analyzing productions of Shakespeare by the Citz’ in the early 1970s, however, requires a different strategy. These performances took place long before I started attending plays, and there are no video recordings of them. However, the Citizens’ Theatre Collection at the Scottish Theatre Archive does contain hundreds of artifacts related to Citz’ performances, including photographic stills, play scripts, programs, publicity posters, set plans, designer sketches, properties lists, finance reports, minutes from board meetings, stage manager’s reports, newspaper reviews, letters to the editor, and audio tapes.<sup>22</sup> By its nature, embodied theatrical performance is public, spectacular, and temporally fleeting, while the archive is a repository in which its keepers catalogue mementoes, place them in storage, and guard them against unauthorized access. However, even with its restrictions, the archive is certainly not a surreptitious space, and archivists preserve the items in their collections specifically for the benefit of and use by later generations of scholars, critics,

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<sup>22</sup> Special Collections at the University of Glasgow Library is home to the Scottish Theatre Archive, which in turn houses the Citz’ Collection, the official repository for archival material from the Citizens’ Theatre.



and artists. It might not be as accessible a space as the theater; however, the archive provides one of the only means for analyzing old productions.

Yet even with such a diverse assortment of material in the Citz' Collection, I rely mostly on photographic records for my cues. This is in part because of the visually evocative nature of the photos, which allow one actually to look for queer elements, but even the photographs I study hardly represent a wide array, originating mostly from a series of limited-release volumes, *The Citizens' Company Picture Books*, an element that unavoidably restricts access and analysis. Such gaps are to be expected, especially since Special Collections at the University of Glasgow did not begin archiving Citz' productions until 1975 and anything prior to that date was collected by the Citizens' Theatre and sent in "cartons and rubbish bags" for Special Collections to "sort out."<sup>23</sup> Thus, there is unevenness in the quantity of records preserved in the Citz' Collection. Some production files, such as *Hamlet* (Giles Havergal and Philip Prowse, 1970), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Havergal and Prowse, 1972), and *Troilus and Cressida* (Prowse, 1973), contain dozens of local theater reviews, albeit mostly negative, as well as evocative photos. Conversely, other files, for example *Tamburlaine* (Keith Hack and Prowse, 1973) and *Coriolanus* (Jonathan Chadwick and David Fisher, 1974), hold neither a single critical review nor any particularly provocative photos. Faced with such a choice, I concentrated on those productions of Shakespeare's plays that seemed most susceptible

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<sup>23</sup> The Special Collections librarians have done an excellent job grouping items by season and individual production, and in cataloguing the recovered records. However, as Fiona Neale (the senior Library Assistant) confided, when the archival material began arriving, it was "a mess." And, of course, it is an on-going process – Claire McKendrick, the Library Assistant in charge of the Scottish Theatre Archive, intimated that the librarians are still in the process of cataloguing records from the Citz' Collection.

to queer interpretation but that also had sufficient material to support such a claim. These absences shape my analysis, however, and thus the focus of this chapter is narrower than it might have been otherwise. I do not recreate performances; I analyze aesthetic components.

My analysis of these photographs and other records creates a decoupage from the after-life of performance, and as such draws from the reverberations of a production rather than from the actual event itself. My methodology extends the normal life span of the performed event enacted by bodies on a stage, and allows the performance's energy and influence to continue to circulate in art and culture. The archival remains of Citz' performances maintain meanings that are distinct from the performed events, and yet share a connection to original, ephemeral performances. Finally, my approach provides the basis for later chapters by cataloging the elements of the Citizens' style that lead to queer interpretation.

Archival materials provide access to past productions of the Citizens' Theatre Company and challenge rigid conceptions of performance's necessary ephemerality.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Many scholars look at material objects as a way to commune with and extend the effects of performances from the historical past. For example, Andrew Sofer looks at props as a way to "explore a peculiarly theatrical phenomenon: the power of stage objects to take on a life of their own in performance." Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (University of Michigan Press; Ann Arbor, 2003), 2. Such a phenomenon relies, as Alice Rayner contends, on understanding that "one of the distinguishing characteristics of theatre as opposed, say, to books or film is its use of real and tangible objects." Alice Rayner, *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 73. In this way, theatrical performance stays grounded in reality, or at least its objects maintain a functionality of purpose. However, this connection to reality changes after the performance ends. Rayner goes on to argue: "An object may thus become larger than itself as it expands toward multiple associations and meanings, or it may contract toward mute materiality that refutes and escapes the habits of making meaning. In other words, stage props clearly participate in the signifying, narrative, and stylistic functions of the drama as well as the culture" (74). By acknowledging the possibility of an object's participation in the "signifying, narrative, and stylistic functions of the drama as well as the culture," Rayner understands that an aspect of the performance continues after the curtain falls. When an actor touches a prop, or when a character uses an object, these material things become part of the

Notwithstanding Peggy Phelan's oft-noted claim that "performance's only life is in the present," a performance can continue to have a cultural impact after it has ended.<sup>25</sup> The after-life of performance is necessarily different from the event itself, yet it still maintains the vestiges of the performed event. Furthermore, it is possible to uncover a performance's after-life by examining a production's text-based remnants. This "uncovering," however, is not straight-forward, as Barbara Hodgdon suggests in her discussion of photographic stills:

Considered a performance in pieces, the theater photograph undertakes a visual conversation with performance: silent, impoverished, partial, it seizes appearances, violently severs them from their original context; inseparable from and traversed by the lived experience of the theater, it requires anecdote, narrative, to supplement it.<sup>26</sup>

As Hodgdon suggests, a photograph can provide a sense of performance, but its ability to mirror or recreate that performance is unavoidably limited and qualified. There is no direct and equal correlation between looking at photographs and watching a performance; rather, such looking allows a "performance in pieces...a visual conversation...silent,

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audience's theatrical memory, imbedded in the remembrance of actor, of character, and of play, as well as part of a larger cultural experience. Of course, while the props used in a particular performance might retain the "ghost" of the performance, locating and identifying such objects in definitive ways can be difficult. One of the practicalities in recovering such meaning from props, costumes, and set pieces is that they are typically recycled and reused from show to show and season to season according to the dramaturgical needs of the theatrical company. As well, theaters are notoriously short on storage space, which means that if something is so unique as not to be recycled into a future production, it will often find itself tossed on a refuse pile. Plus, the only relics available in the case of the Citizens' Theatre are those textual documents housed in the official archive. However, even within a textual archive, one finds objects imbued with meaning, objects that both patrons and practitioners have handled. Thus, I similarly connect with performances from the past informed by "signifying, narrative, and stylistic functions of the drama and the culture," but this connection involves an examination of a different kind of materiality: archival remains.

<sup>25</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 146.

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Hodgdon, "Photography, Theater, Mnemonics; or, Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Still," in *Theorizing Practice: Redefining Theater History*, ed. W.B. Worthen with Peter Holland (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 89. Hodgdon advocates a productive method of working with photographs that includes accounting for the mediation of images in different mediums and for different purposes. Future work will investigate the circulation and uses of the photos I analyze.

impoverished, partial” and “requires anecdote, narrative to supplement it.” Hodgdon’s qualification holds true not just for photos but for any theatrical artifact, a thing that retains the flavor of a production, a taste of what occurred, and yet is distinct from the original.

The contextual differences between live performance and its relics aside, we can still access aspects of a performance after the fact through its archival remains. Hodgdon’s supposition importantly acknowledges the role of the personal in experiencing a performance’s after-life through photographic stills, in much the same way that experiencing an actual embodied performance also draws on the personal. While my approach borrows from Hodgdon, our trajectories ultimately differ. As she says, “[S]ince I have seen most of the performances these stills ‘document’ – itself an unstable, untheorized, dubious term – such a local history inevitably draws on my own memory.”<sup>27</sup> Because I have not seen any of the Citz’ performances I discuss, the analysis I will offer relies on a different kind of subjective experience: reading the images from Citz’ productions in relation to gay cultural icons, I have as my aim the writing of a different kind of “local history.”<sup>28</sup> Certainly, photographs figure importantly in my analysis, and I offer readings of several images; still, the narrative of Citz’ productions I write is supplemented by its scripts, programs, posters, and newspaper clippings, which comprise the majority of the material in the Citz’ archive. In the end, my local

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>28</sup> I use “local” in the way Hodgdon invokes it above, neither in opposition to “global” nor to evoke a post-colonial meaning. Here, “local” helps contextualize aspects of history that might otherwise be unwritten or go unnoticed—specifically, queer history.

knowledge of Citizens' Theatre's style and its evolution as theatrical/queer aesthetic relies on analysis of materials housed in the Citz' archive.

The Citz' archive provides the basis for a discussion of the signifying, narrative, and stylistic functions of Citz' productions, even though the type of analytic each remnant enables differs with genre. Photographs, for example, record the visual aspects of a production, but they also memorialize how the director, stage manager, photographer, artistic director, designers, and/or archivist want a production to be remembered. Prompt books note the textual variants that make each production unique, including marginal annotations by actors, directors, and stage managers, light and sound cues, and blocking. Sharing in the public dimension, programs guide spectators as they enter the world of the play and posters highlight those aspects of a production that a company thinks will most appeal to potential audience members. Just as the narrative each record provides changes with the type of record one examines, one's analytical opportunity will also vary according to the genre of record. This leads to an important caveat: I do not know why the archive contains what it contains. To assign deliberate intent to the ways in which these items were gathered and preserved would be disingenuous on my part. Yet, bringing a few of these possible narratives together in a collage, I argue that photos from the Citz' archive nonetheless allows us to access the company's distinctive contributions to queer Shakespeare.

Shakespeare and the Citz' Style

In the program for its cross-gendered production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Giles Havergal maps the ways that the Citizens' Theatre Company envisioned the "theatrical experience":

To make each performance an "event" in which you participate. We feel that theatre is no longer a place where you sit at one end of the building in the dark and watch us acting at the other end in the light. Instead, we want to create an unrepeatable event or happening which involves you on many levels... We provide an experience which will entertain in the fullest sense – amusing, enlightening, moving, shocking, upsetting, angering, delighting, and above all astonishing you – the audience.<sup>29</sup>

The Citz' expected its patrons to experience theater as active participants, fully engaged and not sitting quietly in the dark watching passively. For Havergal, a visceral reaction – delight, disgust, or despair – meant that the audience was not only being entertained, but involved in an "event." To this end, the Citz' style elicited an emotional response to its productions through a number of strategies, including regular male and female nudity, radical cutting of canonical texts, campy humor, and cross-gender casting. Although cross-gender casting was one of many strategies, it proves the most provocative, especially in performances of Shakespeare's plays. As Scullion observes:

Certainly, the company's interest in the key themes of gender play and cross-dressing, 'designer's theatre' and camp are consistently developed and reassessed in productions of Shakespeare's plays. However, one might go even further by suggesting that from Havergal and Prowse's first Shakespeare production – *Hamlet* in 1970 – Citizen's Shakespeare has functioned as cultural shorthand, deliberately deployed to advance the company's aesthetic agenda and force its audience's active spectatorship.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> "Director's Notes" in the program for *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972).

<sup>30</sup> Scullion, "Citz' Scotland," 174-5.

The interests Scullion mentions, especially “gender play and cross-dressing, ‘designer’s theatre’ and camp,” become the hallmarks of Citizens’ Shakespeare and form the basis of what has come to be known as Citz’ style. The Citz’ approach to Shakespeare becomes emblematic of a queer theater in which camp was a goal, and Shakespeare provided the means to achieve it.

Among the many strategies favored by Havergal, Prowse, and MacDonald, the “genderqueer” practice of cross-gender casting proved to be the most audacious, radical, and difficult for some Glaswegians to accept.<sup>31</sup> As an anonymous letter to the editor of *The Glasgow Herald* pointed out in response to *Antony and Cleopatra*, “No longer, it seems, are we to be allowed to see the play as the text demands. Bizarre novelties of production and presentation must be heaped upon it. Men playing women’s parts seems to be the order of the day.”<sup>32</sup> This writer suggests a distance between the “demands” of the text and the “bizarre novelties of production,” which includes all-male productions and selective casting across gender. While Citz’ productions might have sought to amuse and delight the audience, they also wanted to shock, upset and anger; and in this regard, they certainly succeeded. From the moment of Havergal’s arrival, Glasgow’s local critics responded to Citz’ productions with unbridled hostility – at least in the reviews collected

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<sup>31</sup> The term “genderqueer” began to be commonly used at the turn of the twenty-first century by youth who feel that their gender identities and/or gender expressions do not correspond to the gender assigned to them at birth, but who do not want to transition to the “opposite” gender, or understand gender deviance as correlating necessarily with non-standard sexual object-choice. Characterizing themselves as both female and male, as neither, or as somewhere in between, genderqueer persons challenge binary constructions of gender. For more see “Genderqueer Revolution”, <http://www.genderqueerreolution.org/gqr/home.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Letter to the Editor, *The Glasgow Herald*, May 19, 1972.

in the Citz' Collection.<sup>33</sup> Christopher Small (*The Glasgow Herald*), Allen Wright (*Scotsman*), Mamie Crichton (*Scottish Daily Express*), and James F. McLean (*The Jewish Echo*) repeatedly eviscerate the company's productions in the early 1970s, especially of Shakespeare. As Wright complained, "At this ambisexual theatre we have seen everything from a male Ophelia in *Hamlet* to a female Dauphin in *Saint Joan*, and even the old women in *The Crucible* were transvestites."<sup>34</sup>

Despite this critical hostility, however, the Citz' found an audience and even critical allies, notably Cordelia Oliver at *The Guardian* who became enamored with Citz' Shakespeare from *Hamlet* on. As well, the Citz cultivated a younger audience to match its youthful energy. Havergal slashed the cost of a single-admit ticket to match the price of a pack of cigarettes, making the Citz' affordable for a wider, less well-off audience. This economic populism significantly increased attendance, especially among 15-24 year olds, who made up 58% of the audience by 1979.<sup>35</sup> And in 1976, a photo feature in *After Dark* spoke to the Citz' appeal to the gay community. Although it was not expressly a "gay magazine," *After Dark* actively targeted a gay male demographic by profiling gay icons and regularly included nude and scantily clothed photos of young, fit men on its cover and as illustrations for its articles.<sup>36</sup> The magazine also regularly reviewed

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<sup>33</sup> My analysis is based on selective citation of reviews that indicate homophobic and queer responses. The reviews are limited to those collected in the Scottish Theatre Archive, and are not meant to indicate a universal consensus. Future work will include a wider range of viewer responses, following Janet Staiger's methodology in "Taboos and Totems: Cultural Meanings of Silence of the Lambs," in (among many other places) Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: the Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Allen Wright, *Scotsman*, May 12, 1972.

<sup>35</sup> Scullion, "Citz' Scotland," 174.

<sup>36</sup> A sampling of these subjects include Casey Donovan (gay porn star, December 1972), Bette Midler (former bathhouse singer, January 1973), Peter Berlin (gay porn star, February, 1975), Barbra Streisand (frequently impersonated icon, April 1975), Arnold Schwarzenegger (nude and "Muscle-bound



contemporary entertainments that were of interest to the gay community. In his feature on the Citz' in *After Dark*'s November 1976 issue, Laurence Senelick applauded the company's predilection for cross-dressing, penchant for nudity, and taste for "blood and glitter."<sup>37</sup> Although Senelick never used the words "gay" or "queer" in his article, he refers to a specific production as "hypercamp, [and] transvestite," to the acting troupe as "attractive, polymorphous, and under thirty," and to the Citizens' style as a "tonic of acuity and flamboyance."<sup>38</sup> What follows is a more specific analysis of the Citz's usage of gay culture and its development of what can now be named a queer aesthetic.

### Shakespeare as Queer Icon

It is perhaps not surprising, given the Citz' interest in cross-dressing, that an image of a transvestite emblemizes the Citz in the early 1970s: William Shakespeare in pink lingerie (see figure 2.2).<sup>39</sup> This representation takes Martin Droeshot's famous bronze engraving from the *First Folio* (1623, see figure 2.3) and recasts the author as a transgressive playwright for modern times (or, at least as an icon for the 1970s Citizens'

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for Glory," February 1977), Donna Summer ("The Sensuous Diva of Sex Rock" before her infamous "Adam and Steve" comments, April 1977), and Peter Allen (bisexual choreographer and "Boy from Oz," February 1978). *After Dark* also promoted its advertising ability in terms of its readers' lifestyles: "Reach the Audience with Money to Spare. You'll find them in *After Dark*! They're affluent, successful and single. With no strings to tie them down. And the time and money to live it up, any chance they get." *After Dark* 9.10 (February 1977), 97. On July 1, 1982 in *The New York Times*, Philip H. Dougherty reported that *After Dark* "has an unaudited circulation of between 60,000 and 70,000" and "that it had gotten a following in the homosexual community seven or eight years before any of the current homosexual magazines came on the market." <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/07/01/business/advertising-after-dark-returning-with-mid-august-issue.html> (accessed on May 12, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Laurence Senelick, "Blood and Glitter in Glasgow," *After Dark* 9.7 (November 1976): 54-61.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>39</sup> This color copy of the image served as the cover for *The Citizens' Company Picture Book, 1974-1976*. I chose to focus principally on this color version as it bears a corollary to the *First Folio*. The *Folio* is the lasting memorial to Shakespeare in much the same way as the *Picture Book*: both present a body of work produced over a specific number of years, and both memorialize that body of work.

Theatre Company). On the *Folio*'s frontispiece, Shakespeare's likeness gives an air of authority and authenticity to the collection of texts. The publisher claims to have compiled "True Originall Copies" of Shakespeare's comedies, histories, and tragedies, and the image reflects what we have come to expect from an English Renaissance author. His face is somber (but not mean) and he gazes directly at potential readers. Shakespeare has gone bald on the top of his head, but he wears his hair long on the sides, and sports a wispy moustache and "soul patch." To modern eyes, he looks almost like a hippie, except his dress reflects a level of affluence, with a starched ruff and intricately embroidered doublet. Finally, the engraving presents Shakespeare in a box with a gray background: we see his head, shoulders, and chest, but the remainder of his body is unseen and unknowable. This iconic image of Shakespeare, passed down over the ensuing centuries, continues to influence how many people think of him, in the early 1970s and today – serious, slightly unapproachable, but well put together.<sup>40</sup>

The Citizens' Theatre takes this popular myth of the Bard of Avon and replaces it with a Shakespeare who is a gender-bending, queer figure. According to Senelick, "Sheila," as [this image of] Shakespeare was affectionately nicknamed, was to bedizen

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<sup>40</sup> Very recently, the debate about what Shakespeare actually looked like has reopened with the "discovery" of the Cobbe oil-on-wood panel painting of Shakespeare, believed to have been painted from life circa 1610. Early in 2009, articles about the Cobbe painting appeared in the *Times of London*, *New York Times*, *Time Magazine*, and other popular publications, with scholar-emeritus Stanley Wells claiming (after three years' research) that the Cobbe is Shakespeare. The romanticized nature of the Cobbe portrait has led Wells, after years of vehement denials, to acknowledge the possibility that Shakespeare might have had an erotic relationship with his only known benefactor, and possible Sonnets "Fair Youth," Henry Wriothsley, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Southampton. Whichever image represents Shakespeare's true likeness is beside the point to my argument; however, the debate that it has reignited is relevant. The fact that Shakespeare scholars are debating the matter in the popular press suggests that not just his words but also Shakespeare's image is somehow sacred, and continues to reify Shakespeare's iconic status. It also, interestingly, places Wells in league with the early 1970s Citz', who wanted to change the way modern audiences looked at Shakespeare (as subject and object).

the Citz's bus, a garishly painted vehicle that traversed the downtown area until the city fathers intervened."<sup>41</sup> Sheila's face is painted in the traditional manner of a female impersonator: cheeks rouged, eyes lined and heavy with mascara, lids shadowed, and lips colored cherry red. However, Sheila retains some masculine characteristics; he wears no wig, but his bald head is surrounded with wavy, shoulder-length hair. He has tweezed his brows, but his moustache and soul patch are well-defined (suggesting the use of a brow pencil). His eyes, sultry and mysterious, gaze not at the observer, but off into the distance. His Elizabethan collar is crisp white, referencing Droeshot's engraving and helping to frame Sheila's face. But, in a significant difference with Droeshot's iconic image, Sheila's torso, arms, and upper thighs are exposed. Sheila wears a pink bodice with matching garters and hot pink opera length gloves. The shading on his chest suggests cleavage below the corset and instead of a thong or tap pants, he is wearing pink tights. One hand on his right hip, which he pushes out seductively, with his other hand, Sheila draws back crimson velvet curtains.

The Citz' also used a version of Sheila in black and white as program covers and promotional posters for its 1975-1976 season (see figure 2.4). *The Changeling* poster is the most notorious (even making it to Wikipedia's Citizens' Theatre page), but other productions that season also bore Sheila's image, including Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Georg Buechner's *Woyzeck*, Carlo Goldoni's *Mirandolina*, Seneca's *Thyestes*, and Philip King and Falkland L. Cary's *Sailor Beware*.<sup>42</sup> Taken in this context, Sheila appears to be on a

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<sup>41</sup> Senelick, "Queer Root," 35. According to Senelick, Sheila also appeared on buttons and bumper stickers.

<sup>42</sup> "1970s Controversies," Citizens' Theatre, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens'\\_Theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens'_Theatre) (accessed February 20, 2009).

theatrical stage, and the roundel emblemizes an actor playing a role. The lighting and shadow could indicate a spotlight, especially in contrast with the blackness that surrounds the circle of light focused on him. In this setting, he draws back the curtain to reveal a performance taking place – perhaps of one of Shakespeare’s plays performed at the Citizens’ Theatre. As a symbol of Shakespeare at the Citz’, Sheila prepares the audience for a production that defies conventional expectations and highlights the Citz’ approach: cross-gender casting, bodily exposure, and irreverence.

Sheila clearly alludes to non-normative sexual practices. His kit reflects an erotic fantasy: a fetishized, barely clad figure who is tarted up and apparently ready to go. The figure’s stance is open and sexually inviting; he seemingly pulls back a canopy and tells an unseen companion, “Come and get it.” The spotlight effectively highlights the costume: straight from Frederick’s of Hollywood, but with a queer twist. A man, not a woman, wears the provocative underclothes, one with distinctive facial hair and male-pattern baldness. Sheila takes the theatrical stage, a metaphor for an extremely public space, and turns it into a boudoir, a domestic and sexualized enclosure. The association is clear: just as Sheila presents Shakespeare as a sexy, playful, transgressive figure, the Citizens’ Theatre will present Shakespeare’s plays in sexy, playful, transgressive ways.

It is also the case that this image of Shakespeare in drag is funny: with his bedroom eyes, Sheila seems to ask, “Why so serious?” The spotlight that surrounds Sheila resembles a bright moon in contrast with the black backdrop, and perhaps alludes to midwinter nights, carnivalesque transformation, and the British tradition of Pantomime. Panto is a popular musical-comedy genre traditionally performed at Christmas, with historical connections to Feasts of the Boy Bishop and the festival of

Twelfth Night, celebrations when it was customary for the “normal” order of things to be reversed. In Panto, these non-normative practices find theatrical expression in cross-dressing (a young female plays the “Principal Boy,” a mature male plays the “Dame”), active audience participation, slapstick, and sexual innuendo. Sheila could certainly pass for a Panto Dame, with his elaborate female dress and male characteristics, sexy appearance, and humorous attitude.

Another possible reference is to British glamour rock. By 1975 images of male musicians performing in outrageous, flamboyant clothes, makeup, hairstyles, and platform-soled boots were widely accessible.<sup>43</sup> Glam (or glitter) rock is a native British performance genre, made famous in the 1970s by T. Rex, Gary Glitter, Slade, and other musicians who trafficked in cross-dressing and androgyny as strategies of artistic expression. Yet as with Sheila, glam rockers retained masculine aspects along with the incorporation of lipstick and eyeliner, sequins, and wigs. And as with Panto, glam rock creates a space in which cross-dressing is socially acceptable, although it differs significantly in that glam rockers and their fans can explore and experiment with prescribed gender roles.

To Britons in the 1970s, Sheila also might reference an ingénue in one of the playful sex comedies on stage at the time – for example, Miss Prentice in Joe Orton’s

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<sup>43</sup> Glam rock recurs in California in the 1980s, practiced primarily by glam metal bands, such as Poison, Vixen, and Mötley Crüe. For glam metal artists, gender androgyny does not correlate with sexual ambiguity, and glam metal is devoutly heterosexual, even to the point of homophobia. However, even with its apparently heterosexist reinvention as a genre, British glamour rock was queered in the film *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes, 1998). More recently, Adam Lambert re-popularized glam rock during his appearances on *American Idol* (2009). Lambert’s sexual ambiguity was the subject of sustained debate, and the subject of cover stories in *Entertainment Weekly* and *The Advocate*, until he came out publicly on the cover of *Rolling Stone* (“The Liberation of Adam Lambert,” June 9, 2009).

*What the Butler Saw* (1969) – who spends the entire play in underwear. Perhaps the most obvious visual reference, though, is to Dr. Frank N. Furter from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* who describes himself as “a Sweet Transvestite from Transsexual, Transylvania.”<sup>44</sup> For Frank N. Furter, “transsexual” denotes a pansexual interest in persons of any gender as well as the adoption of aspects of female dress, including a corset, stacked platform heels, and elaborate makeup. It follows, then, that if Sheila shares Frank N. Furter’s penchant for women’s lingerie, Sheila might also possess the doctor’s sexual appetites. With the release of the film version of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* in 1975, and especially given the film’s subsequent cult following, the possibility for recognizing Frank N. Furter and Sheila as genderqueer has only increased in the ensuing decades. Sheila, Panto Dames, glam rockers, and Frank N. Furter share a common interest in the relocation of a minoritized queer practice (cross-dressing/transvestism) onto the public stage.

Sheila, thus, is a simultaneously “funny” and disruptive figure; in this capacity, Sheila announces to potential audience members that the Citz’s performances they will attend will be outrageous, flamboyant, and surprising. Sheila is the Dionysius to Shakespeare’s Apollo, representing both deviant theatrical practices and the expression of non-normative sexual and gender identity. In choosing Sheila as their icon, the Citizens’ Company seems to insist: this is not your mother’s Shakespeare.

### Radical Drag as Theatrical Aesthetic

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<sup>44</sup> Richard O’Brien, “Sweet Transvestite,” in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (New York: Samuel French, 1973). The show premiered in the West End in 1973, Los Angeles in 1974, and on Broadway in 1975 – all directed by Jim Sharman and starring Tim Curry as Frank N. Furter.

Whereas drag performance was acceptable on the British stage through the late 1960s, most notably in Christmas pantomimes, after the New York Stonewall Riots some gay political groups begin to use drag as a radical form of social protest. “Radical drag” deviated from earlier practices of female impersonation, including those of the gay community, in that it did not attempt to mask the practitioner’s gender; instead, like its more recent descendants, genderqueer and genderfuck,<sup>45</sup> radical drag insisted on the incorporation of both male and female attributes. At the same time, radical drag queens made their gayness part of their drag practice.<sup>46</sup> According to Kris Kirk and Ed Heath, “radical drag was constant street theatre, to make ordinary people think about sex roles.”<sup>47</sup> Instead of trying to pass as female, male practitioners of radical drag wanted to retain and even highlight their masculine characteristics. Roger Baker notes that the queens who practiced this new evolution of drag, including the Rad Fems, Gay Liberation Front’s Street Theatre Group, “were wary of straightforward female impersonation... [and] developed a more playful, almost androgynous, attitude towards

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<sup>45</sup> “Genderfuck” seemingly originates in Christopher Lone, “Genderfuck and its Delights” in *Gay Sunshine* (1979): “I want to criticize and poke fun at the roles of women and of men too. I want to try and show how not-normal I can be. I want to ridicule and destroy the whole cosmology of restrictive sex roles and sexual identification.” Quoted in David Bergman’s *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 7. Although we usually associate genderfuck with queer sexualities (lesbian, gay, bisexual), people of any orientation may practice it. For example, The Cockettes, a psychedelic drag troupe founded in the late 1960s in San Francisco comprised of “a flamboyant ensemble of hippies (women, gay men, and babies) decked themselves out in gender-bending drag and tons of glitter for a series of legendary midnight musicals at the Palace Theater in North Beach.” [www.cockettes.com/history1.html](http://www.cockettes.com/history1.html). An even mix of women and men, they performed parodies of show tunes, gained cult following, which led to mainstream exposure. For more, see Bill Weber and David Weissman’s 2002 documentary, *The Cockettes*.

<sup>46</sup> For a full account of traditional drag in the late 1960s, see Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

<sup>47</sup> Kris Kirk and Ed Heath, *Men in Frocks* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1984), 109.

both clothing and gender.”<sup>48</sup> Radical drag, in other words, defied gender norms by highlighting iconic aspects of masculinity and femininity. It could refer to an otherwise butch man with a full beard who dons a dress and full makeup, or a seemingly feminine woman with a moustache. However, as John Jacob and Catherine Cerny attest, radical drag queens identified “social experiences stemming from male effeminacy and being gay” as “fundamental identity components leading to radical drag queen appearances.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, radical drag also differed from previous instances of theatrical drag because it connoted a specifically and openly gay reference. As initially practiced by the Radical Fems, it occurred most often as part of political actions rather than in theatrical spaces.

The Citizens’ Theatre, however, appropriated radical drag, and used it for the first time in a theatrical context in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Havergal and Prowse, 1972).<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Kent’s physical appearance as Cleopatra, as memorialized in photographic stills, presents the Egyptian queen as indubitably male, thus queering the titular relationship in *Antony and Cleopatra*. For example, in figure 2.1, Kent’s Cleopatra is topless, dressed in a long sarong. In this photograph, Kent’s pose makes his maleness clear: he stands with his back arched and arms stretched back, prominently displaying his bare torso, pectoral definition, and flat chest. His shoulders are defined, muscled, and

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<sup>48</sup> Roger Baker, *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts* (New York and London: New York University, 1994), 239-240.

<sup>49</sup> John Jacob and Catherine Cerny, “Radical Drag Appearances and Identity: The Embodiment of Male Femininity and Social Critique,” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 22.3 (2004): 122.

<sup>50</sup> It was subsequently used on other stages – for example, The Cockettes. Radical drag is still practiced today, although more as gallery or performance art than as Street Theater. For example, Ottawa’s SAW Gallery presented “Radical Drag: Strength and Subversion” in late 2008. Lara Purvis called the exhibit “strange and beautiful,” “unsettling,” and “provocative.” See [http://www.xtra.ca/public/Ottawa/Radical\\_Drag\\_strength\\_subversion-5616.aspx](http://www.xtra.ca/public/Ottawa/Radical_Drag_strength_subversion-5616.aspx) (accessed April 6, 2009). As well, radical drag led the way for “Club Kids” in the late 1980s / early 1990s and punk-inspired, post-millennial drag performers such as Acid Betty (“The Fiercest Hybrid Drag Queen in New York City”), who appeared on Bravos’ *Project Runway* in 2008 as part of a drag challenge.



much broader than his hips. The rule in female impersonation is that a drag queen's hips must match her shoulders, which gives the illusion of a feminine hourglass (as opposed to a masculine v-shape.) To accomplish this, many drag queens stuff their pantyhose with foam-rubber, prosthetic hips and ass pads. Kent's costume, however, uses no such enhancement. Kent wears dozens of strands of beads around his neck and arms, which delineate his deltoid, bicep, and forearm muscles; Kent looks to be a man, even though he plays a female character.

Kent's appearance also reveals aspects of traditional female impersonation, notably the use of makeup and strategies of physical concealment. Kent wears heavy makeup and traditional Egyptian eye-liner, for example, in figure 2.5. In this still, the same beads that delineate his deltoids in the previous image frame his face and conceal possible chest hair. Whereas in the previous photo Kent stood vertically and displayed his entire body, this image focuses solely on his face. He looks upwards in supplication or wonder, his lips slightly parted. The softness of his curly hair and delicacy of his features emphasize his femininity, youth, and attractiveness. This is not a middle-aged Cleopatra, but a vibrant, sexy, and young-looking representation of the Egyptian queen, whom Havergal calls in the program "half bitch, half Goddess."<sup>51</sup> Kent's appearance mixes a conventional approach to female impersonation with masculine signifiers: the result is radical drag in a theatrical setting.

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<sup>51</sup> Havergal goes on to state, Cleopatra "recognizes in Antony the only man of her stamp, the only man with the power and personality to be worth enslaving. But she can change and when the victory seems to be with Caesar, she feels no scruple in coming to terms with him. Perhaps even her suicide is merely forced on her by the knowledge that the new world emperor has not been enslaved at their first meeting."

When Kent's Cleopatra appears in images with John Duttine's Antony, the result is equally radical: Antony takes the passive role, which insinuates that Cleopatra is the active partner. Even though a piece of fabric covers their bodies as they embrace in figure 2.6, Kent stands at least a head taller than Duttine. This inequity in size causes reviewer Gerd Schulte to complain, "Jonathan Kent as Cleopatra showed too much manly vigour, his voice had too much of a powerful ring to it, and he was, moreover, bigger than John Duttine as Antony, whom one could never believe to be a splendid victor of many battles."<sup>52</sup> Cleopatra's beaded collar identifies Kent as the figure on the right; Duttine, on the left, pulls the fabric (perhaps a bed sheet) over his and Kent's bodies, creating a private space for these two very public figures. Indeed, there is a decided lack of differentiation between the two actors/characters. There is little else to distinguish Kent from Duttine, or Cleopatra from Antony, except for Cleopatra's collar, which is the only clear marker of gender or character identification. The effect here is one of androgyny, interchangeability, and fluidity.

In figure 2.7, however, Kent is in control. He stands behind Duttine and, in a reversal from Kent's own exposure in the first photo, seems to offer him to the audience. Duttine's eyes are closed, his head is thrown back, and his arms and legs are spread wide. Kent, for his part, pulls Duttine's arms even further apart and gazes at the audience. Except for his boots and the tiniest thong, this Antony is stripped bare, his body on display; he passively waits for whatever encounter Cleopatra has in store—be it sexual, sacrificial, or some combination. Antony's passivity continues in figure 2.8: his eyes are

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<sup>52</sup> Gerd Schulte, *Hannoveresche Allgemeine*, June 5, 1972. Translated by The Citizens' Theatre and included in the Citz' Archive.

closed while he rests on an elevated pedestal with his arms by his side in a posture of resignation, acceptance, or death. Kent, standing in front of Duttine, presents a forceful contrast: his eyes stare defiantly out at the audience, his arms raised as if in invocation. Dramaturgically, this scene might come before or after Antony has died, but the difference in postures contrasts Kent and Duttine. Whereas a female Cleopatra in similarly active poses might suggest a feminist realization of the play, in a cast with two males this positioning alludes to active and passive gay sex roles. When appropriating radical drag for the theatrical stage, this distinction is significant, especially given that its practitioners connect effeminacy with their gay sexual identity as a “fundamental component” of their drag appearance. Or, perhaps because in radical drag femininity is no longer made into the opposite of virility but an accompaniment of it, performative gender is detached from a necessary association with either sexual passivity or activity.

Havergal carefully contextualizes Kent’s performance by including a summary of other iconic Cleopatras in the program. The inventory of actors begins, “Master Edmonds was probably the original Cleopatra.” When *Antony and Cleopatra* opened, likely in December 1606 at the Globe and/or Blackfriars, either John Edmans or William Ostler probably played Cleopatra.<sup>53</sup> Because Master Edmonds is the first name listed, Havergal introduces Kent as a part of a historical trajectory begun by another male actor. Havergal goes on to list Sarah Bernhardt (“played Cleopatra on one leg”), Theda Bara (“vintage 1917”), Evelyn Laye (“1925”), Claudette Colbert (“perhaps the most

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<sup>53</sup> See Richard Madelaine, ed., *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare in Production series (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xii-xvi. Madelaine lists no male Cleopatra in his list of productions between 1606 and 1995 except for Edmans/Ostler. More recently, Mark Rylance (a former Citz’ actor and then-artistic director of Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre) gained notoriety by starring as Cleopatra in the Globe’s all-male production of *Antony and Cleopatra* (Giles Block, 1999).

spectacular film version of Cleopatra in 1934”), Vivien Leigh (“1945”), Elizabeth Taylor (“the most expensive film ever made”), Amanda Barrie (“the Cleo of ‘Carry On’ fame”), and “most recently, Hildegard Neil played the part opposite Charlton Heston’s Antony.” This catalogue accentuates Kent’s youth, which is a defining principle of Citz style—all these actresses were in their 30s or 40s (and Bernhardt even older) when they played Cleopatra (who died at 39), while Kent is barely 25 years old.

In addition, Havergal’s inventory mentions mostly film representations of Cleopatra—and mostly big name stars as well—female icons portraying a female icon. However, on this list of film representations, only Neil plays Shakespeare’s Cleopatra. While this testifies to the wide range of possible interpretations of Cleopatra, as well as her iconic stature, it also suggests a possible disassociation between Shakespeare and modern audiences. According to Havergal’s implicit reasoning, the Citz’ offer the best hope of providing a glamorous icon who can simultaneously restore the prestige of Shakespeare’s Cleopatra and become the new Bara, Leigh, or Taylor. By bringing a male Cleopatra back into this lineage, Havergal queers Shakespeare, and plants the seed of a new queer theatrical tradition.

The gay content of a male Cleopatra proved troubling for local theater critics. Christopher Small, an early and ardent adversary of Havergal’s company and performance critic for *The Glasgow Herald*, notes:

There may be reasons why Antony should be shown deserting his cold Octavia (played by a woman) for the hot climes of Egypt and the embraces of Cleopatra (played by a young man), but they’ve got nothing to do with Shakespeare or the theatre for which he wrote the unsurpassably feminine character of this riggish queen, transcending the conventions of his time. As it is, sympathy can only be extended to

Jonathan Kent, mincing and caterwauling his way through the part like a hysterical schoolfellow of Eric.<sup>54</sup>

Small carefully attempts to dissociate Shakespeare, who “wrote the unsurpassedly feminine character of this riggish queen, transcending the conventions of his time,” from Kent’s Cleopatra, who has “nothing to do with Shakespeare or the theatre for which he wrote.” The historical inaccuracy of Small’s assertion aside, his objections come across as generationally dated. From his use of “riggish” (used by Enobarbus to describe Cleopatra’s “infinite variety” [II.ii.245] but considered obsolete in the 1913 revised, unabridged edition of *Webster’s Dictionary*, meaning “wanton”) to his reference to Eric Williams, the evangelical anti-hero of F.W. Farrar’s *Eric, or Little by Little* (1858) who was popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but largely forgotten after the Edwardian period, Small seems ill-equipped for Citz’ Shakespeare. In addition, the sympathy he suggests audiences should extend to a “mincing and caterwauling” Kent reveals Small’s own priggish attitude towards homosexuality. Nonetheless, Small was not alone in his critique.

After complaining about Cleopatra’s hairy stomach, Allen Wright is more open in his discomfort, submitting that “Cleo is presented as a voluptuous homosexual, attended to by a bare-breasted handmaiden instead of the usual eunuch. It would seem that Antony’s depravity was more complex than we had thought...The great drama of passion and the ruination of nobility has been crushed.”<sup>55</sup> Drag, in this production, was explicitly a marker of homosexuality, and Antony’s failing, according to Wright, was in his

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<sup>54</sup> Christopher Small, *Glasgow Herald*, May 15, 1972.

<sup>55</sup> Allen Wright, *Scotsman*, May 12, 1972.

attraction to another man. Whereas including bare-breasted handmaidens as part of the production dramaturgically highlights anatomical differences between male and female bodies, Wright focuses on its moral depravity. Neither “great passion” nor “nobility” can include “homosexual” as part its composition.

Other negative notices similarly highlight critical resistance to a male Cleopatra. Jan Spierdijk, for example, seems unable to understand the possibility of sexuality between men, arguing, “Cleopatra played by an actor, an interpretation which is historically defensible...but which here clearly destroys the sensual tension between the two lovers as well as robbing Antony’s enslavement of immediacy and justification.”<sup>56</sup> For Spierdijk, the hint of sexuality between men destroys the play’s sensuality and the rationale for the decision to cross-gender cast seems incomprehensible – even if “historically defensible.” James F. McLean takes what might be considered a feminist perspective when he opines, “I am puzzled as to why an educated human should imagine that a mere male could presuppose the inner feeling of woman far less enact it in its joy, its doubt and sorrow.”<sup>57</sup> *La Bibre Belgique* similarly notes,

Giles Havergal’s production ... slips into the grotesque. For truly, how could the fabulous character of the Queen of Egypt who has all the sensuality of a woman be played properly by a neutered cat, wiggling its hips and shaking its neck, who raised laughter from the audience when he said ‘and there is nothing of the woman in me.’ One cannot believe it.<sup>58</sup>

Finally, as an anonymous letter to the editor of *The Glasgow Herald* in 1972 demonstrates, Kent’s Cleopatra outraged more Glaswegians than just theater critics:

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<sup>56</sup> Jan Spierdijk in *De Telegraaf*, June 28, 1972. Translation provided by the Citizens’ Collection.

<sup>57</sup> James F. McLean, *The Jewish Echo*, May 18, 1972. He continues: “And why, too, heighten the being of woman by a breast-bare servant, and not cast the entire play by men.”

<sup>58</sup> *La Bibre Belgique*, June 2, 1972. Translation provided by the Citizens’ Collection.

Are there insufficient females in the company? If so, there are plenty of unemployed actresses. And now, in the most erotic and sensuous of Shakespeare's heroines, we again have a male actor... Whatever delights the director and actors derive from the strange malaise which seems to afflict them, I for one, regret the loss of pleasure which a trip to the Gorbals [the Citz's neighborhood] used to offer."<sup>59</sup>

These notices share a common grievance centering on the disruptive casting of a male to play Cleopatra. Presenting an androgynous Egyptian queen and the subsequent implication of a homosexual relationship, these performative elements correspond to strategies employed by Gay Liberation political action groups such as the Radical Fems. By appropriating this new genre of drag performance, the Citz', without any explicit claim of doing so, turns Antony and Cleopatra (and *Antony and Cleopatra*) queer.

Radical drag continued to be an important part of the Citz' style after *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Troilus and Cressida* (Prowse, 1973), for example, suggests the continuation of the appropriation of radical drag as a theatrical strategy, but this time through the relationship of two male characters, Patroclus (Rayner Bourton) and Achilles (Mike Gwilym). The relationship between Achilles and Patroclus is a key element of the myths associated with the Trojan War. Whereas in the *Iliad* the two men clearly have a deep and extremely meaningful friendship, what that means to readers/viewers now varies widely. While Achilles and Patroclus might seem to be "war buddies" to some, to others they might represent a pederast couple. In the Citz' production, they portray an affirmative homosexual relationship.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Letter to the Editor, *Glasgow Herald*, May 19, 1972.

<sup>60</sup> There is a tradition of playing Achilles and Patroclus as lovers. Francis A. Shirley quotes Percy Hammond as reporting that in the Players Club production (Henry Herbert, 1932), George Gaul as Patroclus did not "make much of the pansy implication of the text." See Frances A. Shirley, ed., *Shakespeare in Production: Troilus and Cressida* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 139.

In figure 2.9, for example, a mostly naked Achilles sits on Patroclus' bare shoulders. The image of an essentially nude man held aloft on another mostly nude man's shoulders suggests a specifically physical context for what is, in Shakespeare's text, represented only equivocally as a sexual relationship. Gwilym is the figurative and literal top to Bourton's bottom. Gwilym's crotch presses against the back of Bourton's head while Gwilym's legs hook over Bourton's shoulders and wrap around his torso. For his part, Bourton's hands reach up and hold on to Gwilym's knees. Their physical closeness, the fact of skin to skin contact, and their characters' apparent comfort with such closeness, proposes a specifically gay reference. Also in figure 2.9, a tough, macho Gwilym stands over Bourton's dead body, his foot on top of the corpse. The position of Bourton's body, with legs spread wide and an arm flung above his head, intimates a close relationship between sex and death, while also alluding to gay male sex roles of active and passive.

The other key element of radical drag is androgyny; in this regard, Gwilym in particular presents a radical figure. Like Kent's Cleopatra, Gwilym as Achilles wears a collar and several strands of beads. In one photo, Achilles' robe falls suggestively off his shoulders and hangs long, like a queen's train, while another Gwilym stands provocatively with one leg hitched possessively upon the prostrate Bourton. In the later

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Shirley points out that "by 1936, Norman Wooland (Achilles) and Basil Langton (Patroclus) were suggesting 'luxurious vice'... 'Patroclus minced' for the Marlowe Society 1940... [and] with daring for the 1950s, [Glen Byam] Shaw's promptbook directs Patroclus to lie across the stage steps and touch Achilles' leg as they question Thersites" (139). For a brief history of Achilles and Patroclus in the immediate advent of the Citz's production, see Anthony Dawson, "The 1960s: The Erotics of War," in *The New Cambridge Shakespeare Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Anthony B. Dawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 52-55. For more recent productions, see Rutter, "Designs on Shakespeare," in *Enter the Body*, especially 120-123 and 134-140.



image, Gwilym's thong barely contains his genitals, while the hair on his chest, underarms, and pubis further signifies his maleness. The masculine and feminine blend together, though, as Gwilym stands with his hands on his hips and his necklaces and robe fall to the side, reminiscent of Sheila's provocative pose. Bourton's Patroclus also blends masculine with feminine. In figure 2.9, he wears his hair in shag cut, and sports lipstick and a rhinestone choker—all feminine markers. However, except for his white singlet, he is otherwise bare; and the thong draws further attention to his male body. While Bourton and Gwilym are not as radical as Kent in their melding of masculine and feminine, their appearances nonetheless demonstrate radical drag as crucial aspects of the Citizens' emerging queer aesthetic.

### Greek Camp/Gay Sauna

Just as gay icons and practices inform gay culture, the reference of certain physical spaces allude to gay community. Saunas, steam baths, and bathhouses, for example, historically have provided men opportunities to meet for companionship and sex.<sup>61</sup> Men have been resorting to bathhouses for sex since at least the 15<sup>th</sup> century and frequenting specifically gay bathhouses since at least the late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Bathhouses (and in the vernacular “the baths” or “the tubs”) vary considerably in size and amenities, ranging from small establishments with 10 or 20 rooms and a handful of lockers to multi-storey saunas with a variety of room styles or sizes and multiple steam baths, Jacuzzis, and even swimming pools. However, they usually have at least one steam room (or wet sauna), as well as showers, lockers, and small private rooms.

<sup>62</sup> For example, there was a purge against the “vice of sodomy” in Florence in 1492 that targeted the places men used to meet and have sex, including baths, taverns, and *casini* (sheds or houses used for illicit sex and gambling). The *Eight of Watch* (the city's leading criminal court) issued several decrees associated with sodomy and on April 11, 1492, they warned the managers of bathhouses to keep out “suspect boys” on penalty of a fine. In the short period from April 1492 to February 1494, they convicted 44 men for homosexual relations not involving violence or aggravating circumstances. Michael Roche,

Because it was dangerous to pursue same-sex partners in the open, men began cruising areas such as bathhouses, public parks, alleys, train and bus stations, movie theaters, public lavatories (cottages or tearooms), and gym changing rooms. By the 1970s, all of these settings were known, both within and without the gay community, to be associated with homosexual contact. In these spaces, otherwise innocuous gestures and movements, such as sliding one's finger across a side of a door or repeating a certain number of foot taps, could announce one's availability for sexual contact as well as preferred sex roles. These codes are usually only known to a select group—to an observer who is not “in the know,” a wink is simply a nervous tic and a foot tap might indicate a “wide stance.” However, for knowledgeable practitioners or observers, using gay argot conveys specific knowledge of gay community practices.<sup>63</sup>

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*Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). David Higgs reports the first recorded police raid on a Parisian bathhouse was in 1876 in the *Bains de Gymnase* on the *Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière*. The police prosecuted the manager and two employees for “facilitating pederasty” and six other men, aged 14-22 (“probably prostitutes”) for “a crime against public decency.” David Higgs, “Paris,” in *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories since 1600*, ed. David Higgs (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 25. George Chauncey writes that New York police conducted the first recorded raid on a gay bathhouse in the United States on February 21, 1903. They arrested 26 men at the *Ariston Hotel Baths* and brought 12 to trial on sodomy charges; 7 men received sentences ranging from 4 to 20 years in prison. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). For more on gay spaces, see also Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997); James Gardiner, *Who's a Pretty Boy, Then?: One Hundred and Fifty Years of Gay Life in Pictures* (New York: Serpent's Tail, 1998); Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See Mark Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003) for more on the history of the baths in London's Jermyn Street, evoked by Neil Bartlett in *Mr Clive & Mr Page* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1996). Also, Jason Prior's 2000 University of New South Wales dissertation on the history of gay bathhouses in Sydney going back to 1968. Finally, see GayTubs.com for more on the history of gay bathhouses in North America.

<sup>63</sup> It was an issue of safety as much as an issue of community construction. For, in gay vernacular, “friend of Dorothy” (FOD) is a term for a gay man. The phrase dates back at least to World War II, when asking if someone was a friend of Dorothy, or identifying oneself as a friend of Dorothy, offered a euphemistic way to discuss sexual orientation. Although the origin of the term is indeterminable, the most common attribution is to the central character in the movie version of *The Wizard of Oz*: it starred gay icon Judy Garland, and Garland's Dorothy was uncommonly supportive and understanding of her friends'

Given this historical context, staging a production in a gay communal space re-signifies the setting of a play as queer. This re-signification draws on both public knowledge about sites for gay sex and “insider knowledge” about those sites’ codes and protocols. At the same time, a gay audience member’s ability to recognize such an allusion creates a sense of community among those likeminded individuals who recognize setting choices as queer spaces. Just as gay vernacular produces and is produced by gay communities, the ability to recognize places as gay becomes an important component of gay identity; conversely, hostility towards such representations, in turn, reaffirms the need for such codes in order to foster safe communication.

A photo of the Greek camp in Prowse’s *Troilus and Cressida* suggests an allusion to gay space by presenting several pairs of young, half-naked men lounging around as if at a sauna (see figure 2.10).<sup>64</sup> One pair lies upstage right with their legs propped up and opened to one another, their genital areas obscured by white American football helmets. The positions of their legs perhaps suggest mutual masturbation, especially in tandem with their physical closeness to one another. The pair seated upstage left is also close to one another but engaged in conversation, their cigarettes suggesting a post-coital intimacy. Upstage center, a clothed Cressida (Angela Chadfield) looks down at Hector (David Yelland) and Troilus (David Hayman), two rough-trade youths sitting on wooden stairs. Chadfield sits, her chair covering her body, removed from the homosocial coupling occurring around her. Yelland and Hayman’s beaded necklaces contrast with

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differences. For example, Dorothy accepts the Lion just as he is, even after he admits, “I’m afraid there’s no denying, I’m just a dandy lion.” See William L. Leap and Tom Boellstorff, *Speaking in Queer Tongues: Globalization and Gay Language* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Glasgow’s gay saunas in the early 1970s included Spa 19, The Lane, and The Garage Leisure.

their black jockstraps, white socks, and black workman boots. Yelland looks off to his right, perhaps cruising for companionship; however, Hayman sits with his legs spread provocatively apart while he touches his penis and stares directly into the camera.

Setting *Troilus and Cressida* in a bathhouse makes the “unspeakable” vice of the Greeks impossible to ignore. For those versed in the customs of a gay sauna, the allusion is glaringly evident; however, even if one did not know the specific ins and outs of bathhouse etiquette, the homosocial pairing could suggest that something queer was happening at the Citz’. Indeed, the critics did notice, and savaged the production, paying particular attention to those aspects that connoted homosexuality and the incorporation of gay space. James Watson, for example, observes, “The Glasgow Citizens’ Theatre Company has done it again. Their treatment of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* provokes controversy with its parade of pulchritude (male and female) and its predilection for black leather loin cloths.”<sup>65</sup> Watson’s acknowledgment of the beautiful bodies on stage connects with his recognition of the provocative, fetishized, male-gendered sexual implication of “black leather loin cloths.” Other reviewers follow suit, and few days later, Allen Wright complains,

The language of Shakespeare has seldom been more horribly abused. It is so difficult to make out what is being said that one is reduced to watch the spectacle. Helen and Cressida spend the greater part of the play languishing in a watchtower, which resembles a combination of the wooden horse of Troy and a New Orleans brothel. In another corner of the stage, Achilles and Patroclus pass the time in homosexual embrace. It displeased me so much that I found it an ordeal to sit through it.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> James Watson, *Evening Times* (Glasgow), March 31, 1973.

<sup>66</sup> Allen Wright, *Scotsman*, April 2, 1973

For Wright, the most important pieces of the play are Shakespeare's words, which he finds "horribly abused." Yet, at the same time, Wright points out several instances in which the "spectacle" connotes gay space. For example, bathhouses are male homosocial communities, so to relegate Helen and Cressida to towers makes a stronger allusion to gay space – after all, bathhouses are male domains. Also, New Orleans' brings to mind *Mardi Gras* and Southern Decadence, both celebrations that offer opportunities for gay sexual relations and public displays of nudity (in order to collect beads). Finally, his displeasure at watching Achilles and Patroclus is framed by a spatial reference: a corner of the stage becomes graphically gay. Likewise, Mamie Crichton grumbles, "Near nudity on stage at the Citizens' Theatre has become so flagrantly frequent that the symbolism of human nature in the raw wears thin. Now it's *Troilus and Cressida* that gets the treatment with massed male bodies all but naked, the only two females in topless garments and two other persons in constant, nauseating homosexual embraces."<sup>67</sup> Crichton's complaints center on the suggestion of male nudity and the presentation of female characters in "topless garments." However, Crichton also emasculates Achilles and Patroclus, referring to them not as men or males, but as "persons in constant, nauseating homosexual embraces." As with Wright's critique, Crichton's response is visceral and negative – the spectacle of homosexuality makes her literally sick to her stomach. Finally, James F. McLean objects, "As Achilles, Mike Gwilym has a presence that commands the stage, albeit as a disgusting treacherous pervert, whose worst furies

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<sup>67</sup> Mamie Crichton, *Scottish Daily Express*, 3 April 1973.

are aroused by the death of his homosexual partner Patroclus.”<sup>68</sup> According to McLean, “disgusting treacherous pervert” aligns with “homosexual.” The aspects that most displease Wright, Crichton, and McLean rely on male bodily spectacle: the segregation of Helen and Cressida, New Orleans-style brothel, nudity, homosexual embrace. To these critics, the inclusion of such elements seems extra-textual and self-indulgent rather than well-conceived, inventive design choices – queers are sick and dirty, and including “them” in the tradition of Shakespeare likewise sullies Shakespeare.

For others, those same elements that turn the Greek camp into a gay space might suggest an innovative way to approach *Troilus and Cressida*. Such an appropriation is no different from setting *The Tempest* in the Caribbean, *Othello* in South Africa, or *Merchant of Venice* in Poland circa 1939. It celebrates Shakespeare’s ability to represent many aspects of humanity, to reflect the world as it really is, and to create a sense of community for some, a site of curiosity for others. In short, the Citz’ inclusion of gay settings offers release not unlike that which gay men seek at the tubs: the feeling that one belongs and a respite from the storm.

#### Beefcake and Jock Strap Shakespeare

Photographic stills from Citz’ productions appropriate poses from “beefcake” magazines, a staple of gay male culture dating from the 1930s to the 1960s. Magazines that featured photographs of attractive, muscular young men wearing “posing straps” typified beefcake – the gay male equivalent of “cheesecake” or pin-up girls (see figure

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<sup>68</sup> James F. McLean, *The Jewish Echo*, April 6, 1973.

2.11). While their primary market was gay men, beefcake magazines operated under the pretext of encouraging fitness and health: the fit, young models were frequently in athletic poses, sometimes depicted solo but sometimes wrestling or boxing with one another. Because these periodicals were widely available in drugstores and magazine stores, even in non-urban areas, buying a copy of a beefcake magazine was the way many young men made their first contact with the gay world before Stonewall.<sup>69</sup> As Thomas Waugh points out,

*One*, the largest ‘gay political’ magazine, never surpassed a monthly circulation of 5,000 in the fifties, while it was not uncommon for gay physique magazines to surpass that many times. One knowledgeable 1965 circulation estimate is 100,000 for the largest and most conservative of the small physique magazines, *Tomorrow’s Man*.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Young Physique*, for example, featured a fold-out centerfold with a young male model wearing a posing strap in an artistic setting—showing total nudity was illegal before 1962, so all models had to wear posing straps. Beefcake magazines came in two varieties: full- and pocket-sized. Full-sized magazines included *Beach Adonis*, *Demi-Gods*, *Face and Physique*, *Mr. America*, *Muscle Boy*, *Muscles a Go-Go*, *Teen Torso*, *Tomorrow’s Man Special*, and *Young Physique*, while pocket-sized included *Adonis*, *Art and Physique*, *Body Beautiful*, *Fizeek Art Quarterly*, *Grecian Guild Pictorial*, *Male Figure*, *Male Pix*, *Man Alive*, *Manorama*, *Manual*, *Man’s World*, *Mars*, *Muscle Teens*, *101 Boys Art*, *Physique Illustrated*, *Physique Pictorial*, *Scan*, *Tomorrow’s Man*, *Trim*, and *Vim*. Gay pornography pioneer Bob Mizer’s Athletic Model Guild, or AMG, produced *Physique Pictorial*, the first all-nude and all-male magazine. In the 1960s, the pretense of being about exercise and fitness was dropped as controls on pornography were reduced. When gay pornography became legal by the end of the decade, the market for beefcake magazines collapsed. In the 1980s and 1990s, beefcake magazines enjoyed resurgence due to a heightened interest in male gym culture as well as the onset of the AIDS epidemic. Numerous titles found success, such as *Men’s Workout*, *Exercise for Men Only*, and *Men’s Exercise*. These magazines are visual-oriented with extensive pictorials in contrast to fitness magazines that focus more on text such as *Men’s Fitness*. Many of the images feature homoerotic or suggestive sexual imagery, such as male models unbuttoning their pants or almost full nudity. Some have included profiles of male strippers and many of the male models have appeared in *Playgirl*.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Waugh, *Hard to Imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from Their Beginnings to Stonewall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 217. According to Waugh, “While one of the ‘gayer’ magazines, *Grecian Guild Pictorial*, estimated 75,000 total readers of physique magazines at the peak of the late fifties, Clark Polak [“a contemporary inside observer... who knew what he was talking about?”] estimated total monthly physique sales of 750,000 magazines in the mid- sixties.”

Beefcake magazines provided a safe means of sexual identification, expression, and release in an otherwise toxic environment where the charge of homosexuality could mean loss of family, livelihood, and even imprisonment.

The Citz' takes beefcake and re-assigns it as an element of its house-style, further queering its theatrical aesthetic. In addition to *Troilus and Cressida*, the all-male cast of *Hamlet* (Havergal and Prowse, 1970) also wears skimpy black loincloths and cloaks. The tone for the play is set when it opens with Hamlet masturbating on-stage while he watches Gertrude and Claudius pantomime sex upstage center (see figure 2.12). Such an opening connects with beefcake by alluding to one of the uses of beefcake magazines – erotic gratification. For some spectators, critics, and scholars this action might seem extra-textual, extraneous, and gratuitous. However, in the Citz' production, it demonstrates Hamlet's isolation, loneliness, and confusion after his father's death, just as readers of beefcake magazines felt alone and separate from society. It also indicates his virility, at least some level of erotic expertise and by implication sexual potency – his body is sexually functional, and his mind willing. This scene certainly embodies the act of “shameful lust” that leads Hamlet to seek revenge for the senior Hamlet (a line that Havergal transposes to the opening and assigns to Ophelia), at the same time Hamlet's action alludes to beefcake magazines and their function in gay male society.<sup>71</sup>

The production strips away any cover provided by the cloaks in both the gravedigger's scene and the climactic fight between Hamlet and Laertes (see figure 2.13.)

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<sup>71</sup> Havergal completely cuts the Ghost from his *Hamlet*; instead, the ensemble takes turns delivering the Ghost's lines. The play opens with the company speaking the Ghost's lines from Act I, scene iv. Gertrude and Claudius enter above and enact “a scene of copulation between incestuous sheets.” Michael Coveney, *The Citz: 21 Years of the Glasgow Citizens Theatre* (London: Nick Hern, 1990), 40; see especially “Chapter 3: *Hamlet*, and the story so far.”



An image of two men, naked except for thongs and long wooden staffs, engaged in a physical contest with each other mirrors the kind of images one would find in a physique magazine (see figure 2.14). Dramaturgically, it presents the two rivals as literally “stripped” bare, unprotected, and heightens the sense of desperation and danger in Hamlet and Laertes’ fight, as well as distinguishing these characters from others, whose bodies are covered by cloaks. As Michael Coveney points out, staging the play in this way “obviously did radiate a sense of sexual and political danger.”<sup>72</sup> Cordelia Oliver calls the audience’s response “unforgettable...the young people in the audience rose to their feet and drowned with their cheers the sounds – and there were plenty – of adult displeasure.”<sup>73</sup> According to Oliver, *Hamlet* proved popular among younger audiences because the Citz’ style “arouses a sense of excitement, at times, almost danger.”<sup>74</sup> By reinforcing the elements of isolation, sexual danger, and aroused excitement, Haverгал’s *Hamlet* provided teens with unrestrained joy, even as it may alienate other (older) audience members. With its reliance on jockstraps, youthful vibrancy, and the sense of living on the edge, the Citz’ transforms an iconic gay commodity – the jockstrap – and the youthful male body into a theatrical aesthetic.

The Citizens’ Theatre Company continued to appropriate beefcake when it presented actors in thongs in the Roman tragedies *Titus Andronicus* (Keith Hack and Amanda Colin, 1971) and *Thyestes* (David Hayman, 1975). In figure 2.15, two thong-clad figures from *Titus* crawl up a staircase, their bodies bent over in submission. At the top of the steps, an orgy or rape seems underway, with two men in white thongs forcing

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<sup>72</sup> Coveney, *The Citz’*, 42.

<sup>73</sup> Oliver, *Magic*, 42-3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

another into submission, while a fourth man holds another by the back of his head. Their faces remain unseen, and their muscular backs, arms, and butts become the focus of the picture. This image alludes to beefcake Greco-Roman wrestling poses, the fetishized violence associated with jockstraps, and forced erotic submission, all common subjects in beefcake magazine photos (see figure 2.16). With its muscular models and the implication of sexual violence, this image from *Titus* seems to pay homage to beefcake poses, suggesting another way to incorporate gay fetishes into the Citz's production style.

The correlation of Citz' style with beefcake photography is especially plain in the publicity still for Seneca's *Thyestes*, a play known to have influenced Shakespeare's *Titus* (see figure 2.17). This photo places the bodies of four young, extremely fit and attractive male actors (Mark Lewis, Rupert Frazier, Paul Bentall, and Philip Bloomfield) on full display. All four men are naked, except for slender strips of cloth covering their genitals. Although Lewis stands to the left, somewhat apart from the rest, he faces full front in a classic beefcake *contra posto* pose. He defiantly rests one hand on his right hip, the other holding the shaft of a long wooden staff. Lewis's posing strap is tight across his groin, and his pubic hair pushes out from the sides of his genital sack. In the center, Frazier and Bentall stand close together near the front of the photo. Frazier's back is to the audience, his bare butt covered by Bentall's right leg in a *passé* position. Bentall faces the front, and like Lewis, he holds a wooden staff, although with both hands instead of one. The angle of Bentall's arched right leg accentuates his genital pouch as he stares off-stage right. Bloomfield stands to the right of Bentall with his broad back and bare ass fully displayed. Notwithstanding whatever impact these design choices would have had in

performance, the lack of clothing, careful poses, and athletic builds of the actors insinuates a visual correlation with models in beefcake photographs (see figure 2.18).

Perhaps the most transparent allusion to beefcake in the Citz's repertoire is in the magazine *After Dark* (1976), which included photos from *Antony and Cleopatra* (figure 2.19) and *Troilus and Cressida* (figure 2.20). In the first image, Kent and Duttine stand in the background, which shifts the focus to the foreground: Octavius (Mike Gwilym, center) flanked by a female and male chorus (Angela Chadfield and Geoff Lerway). Gwilym, like Duttine, wears a strap that barely covers his crotch. In addition to his loincloth, strips of leather bind Gwilym's arms and torso. Lerway wears a long linen sarong, but his torso is bare. The backlight renders the sarong partially opaque, and Lerway wears it low, barely above his pubes, knotted in the front to suggest a penis bulge. Chadfield provocatively exposes her right breast, but her body is otherwise covered and her costume reveals little else. The bodies of the men, on the other hand, are on full display, as if enacting a tribal fantasy for a beefcake photo spread. Likewise, although Chadfield again bares her breast in *After Dark's Troilus and Cressida* layout, male nudity dominates the spread, which includes a sidelong peek at Bourton's pubes. With its allusion to bathhouse culture, the rough-trade fantasy Prowse proposes in *Troilus and Cressida* would be at home in any of Bob Mixer's American Athletic Guild spreads and the fetishized motorcycle boots and leather jockstraps are staple aesthetics of beefcake photos.

By appropriating beefcake, the Citizens' Theatre Company turns a gay male commodity into a theatrical aesthetic. When the Citz' invokes beefcake magazines, the company similarly references the history of desire for men before the advent of Gay

Liberation. And just as certain commodities afforded a sense of visual pleasure at a time when homosexuality was illicit, the inclusion of beefcake in Citz's productions likewise helped create a community based on desire.<sup>75</sup> There were few places in Glasgow where one could find such stunning examples of male physical beauty in the early 1970s, or others who appreciated such beauty – except, perhaps, when watching Shakespeare at the Citz'.

### Looking Forward to Queer Shakespeare

This chapter explored how the Citizens' Theatre Company appropriated certain iconic aspects of queer culture and how those elements subsequently became emblematic of the Citz' house-style. These include alluding to iconic figures, such as Shakespeare and Cleopatra; to radical practices employed by drag queens; to places explicitly associated with gay men, such as bathhouses; to commodities of gay male visual pleasure, such as beefcake magazines. Like the separate strands that come together in a fabric, the Citizens' Theatre frequently wove together several elements of gay culture in a single production. The Citz' presented a topless, obviously male actor as Cleopatra, turned Achilles and Patroclus into glam rockers with explicit homosexual appetites, and

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<sup>75</sup> In 1967, just prior to Havergal's arrival in Glasgow, the Sexual Offences Act partially decriminalized homosexuality in England and Wales. This action, alongside the Stonewall Riots in New York City, led Ian Dunn, Ian Christie, John Briggs, and John Breslin to establish the Scottish Minorities Group in Glasgow in 1969. The SMG, which began meeting simultaneously with Havergal's arrival in Glasgow, promoted the rights of homosexual men and women, offered counseling, worked to reform the legal code, and provided meeting places for lesbians and gay men. In the early 1970s the SMG organized the first gay disco in Scotland, participated in drag kiss-ins in conjunction with the Gay Liberation Front (a U.S.-based group that expanded to the UK in 1971), and repeatedly introduced legislation to legalize homosexuality in Scotland. However, as ready as young Glaswegians were for social change and radical theater, others resisted the desire for a new order; homosexual acts remained illegal in Scotland until 1980, more than a decade longer than in England and Wales. For more see "LGBT History in Scotland," <http://www.lgbthistoryscotland.org.uk/> (accessed May 7, 2009).

took Shakespeare-as-Tim Curry's Dr. Frank N. Furter from *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* for its company logo. For the Citz', though, cross-gender casting was simply one of many strategies intended to elicit a visceral response and to make Shakespeare more appealing to modern audiences. Cross-gender casting at the Citz', in short, was neither more nor less important than the other queer aesthetics upon which the company relied.

By intertwining these cultural threads into the tapestry of Citizens' style, the theatrical aesthetics of the Citz' became indelibly queer. These queer aesthetics become especially evident in the Citz's approach to performing Shakespeare. For example, though Sheila references Shakespeare, he also alludes to radical drag and reaffirms the theatre as a queer space. Likewise, in addition to presenting Achilles and Patroclus as beefcake pinups inhabiting gay space, the Citz' recovers the pair as an *iconic* gay couple and at the same time alludes to aspects of gay culture. By incorporating elements of gay culture into its production style, Citizens' Shakespeare provided a model for other companies to queer Shakespeare as well. In subsequent chapters, I return to similar referents (icons, practices, places, and commodities) in order to discuss the ways successive companies used queer theatrical devices to inform their own productions.

The aesthetics used to queer effect in Citz's productions of Shakespeare can provide insight into and the means by which to mark successive productions of Shakespeare as queer. These ensuing productions share cross-gender casting as a common trait, but the ways in which they appropriate and re-brand queer referents, as well as their points of queer reference, vary widely. Nonetheless, a continuum of queer Shakespeare in performance that begins with the Citz' informs Cheek by Jowl's all-male

*As You Like It* and several all-male productions of *Twelfth Night*. Thus, I explore the queer performance of Shakespeare on the late- and post-millennial stage.

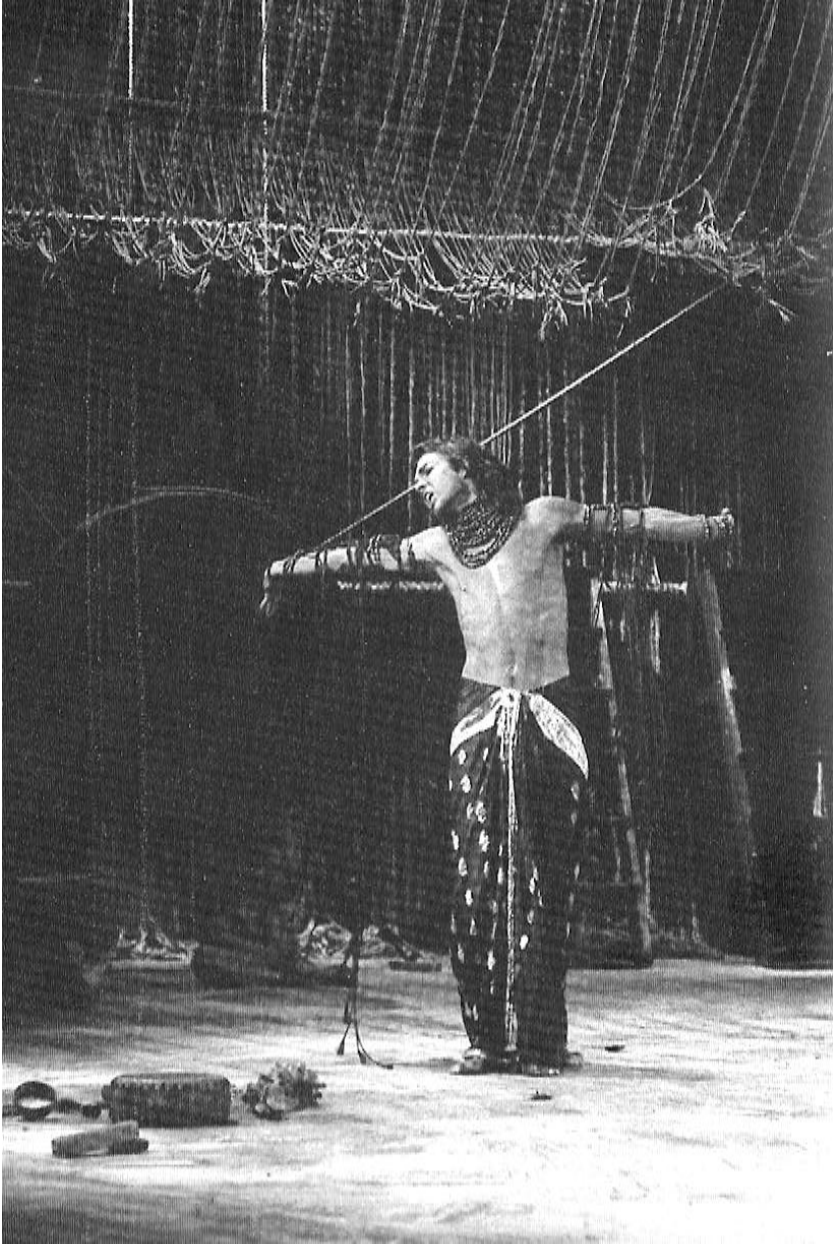


Figure 2.1 Jonathan Kent as Cleopatra. The Citizens' Theatre's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972).

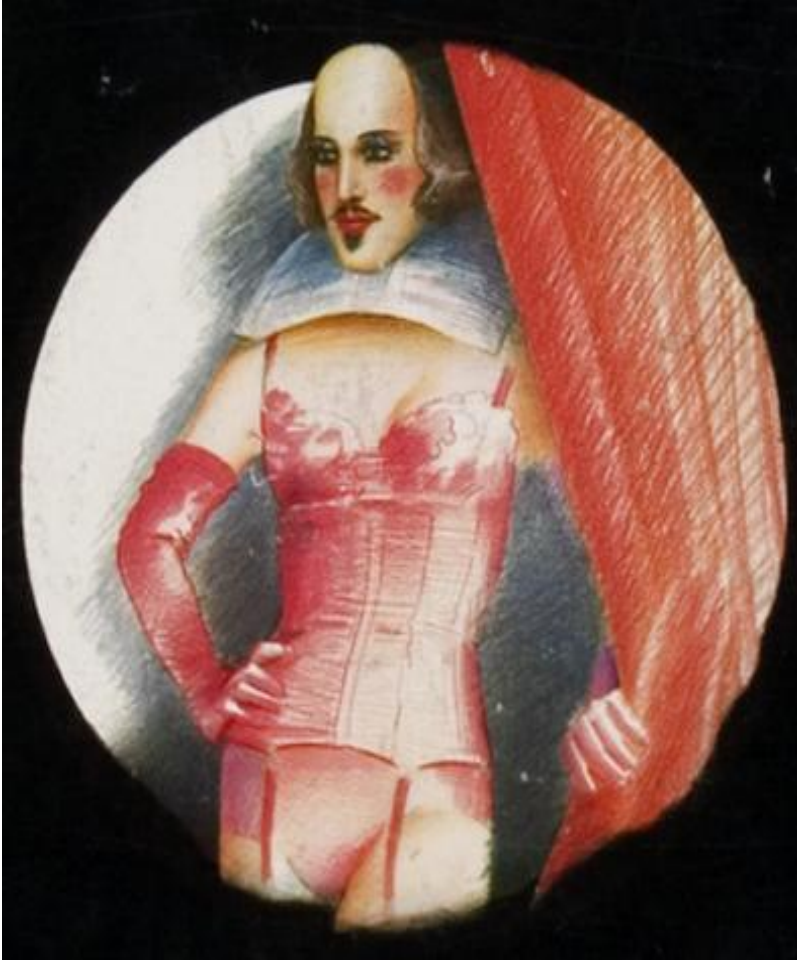


Figure 2.2 "Sheila" (circa 1975).



Mr. WILLIAM  
**SHAKESPEARES**  
COMEDIES,  
HISTORIES, &  
TRAGEDIES.

Published according to the True Originall Copies.



LONDON

Printed by Isaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1617.

Figure 2.3 Shakespeare as First Folio author (1623).

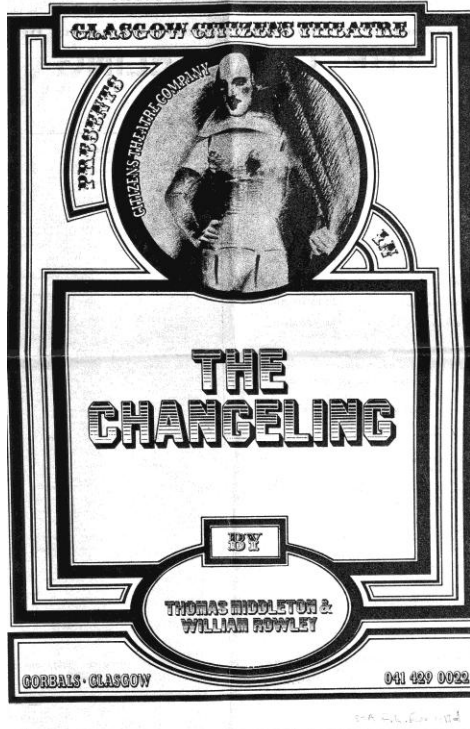


Figure 2.4 Sheila as the program cover. *The Changeling* (1976).

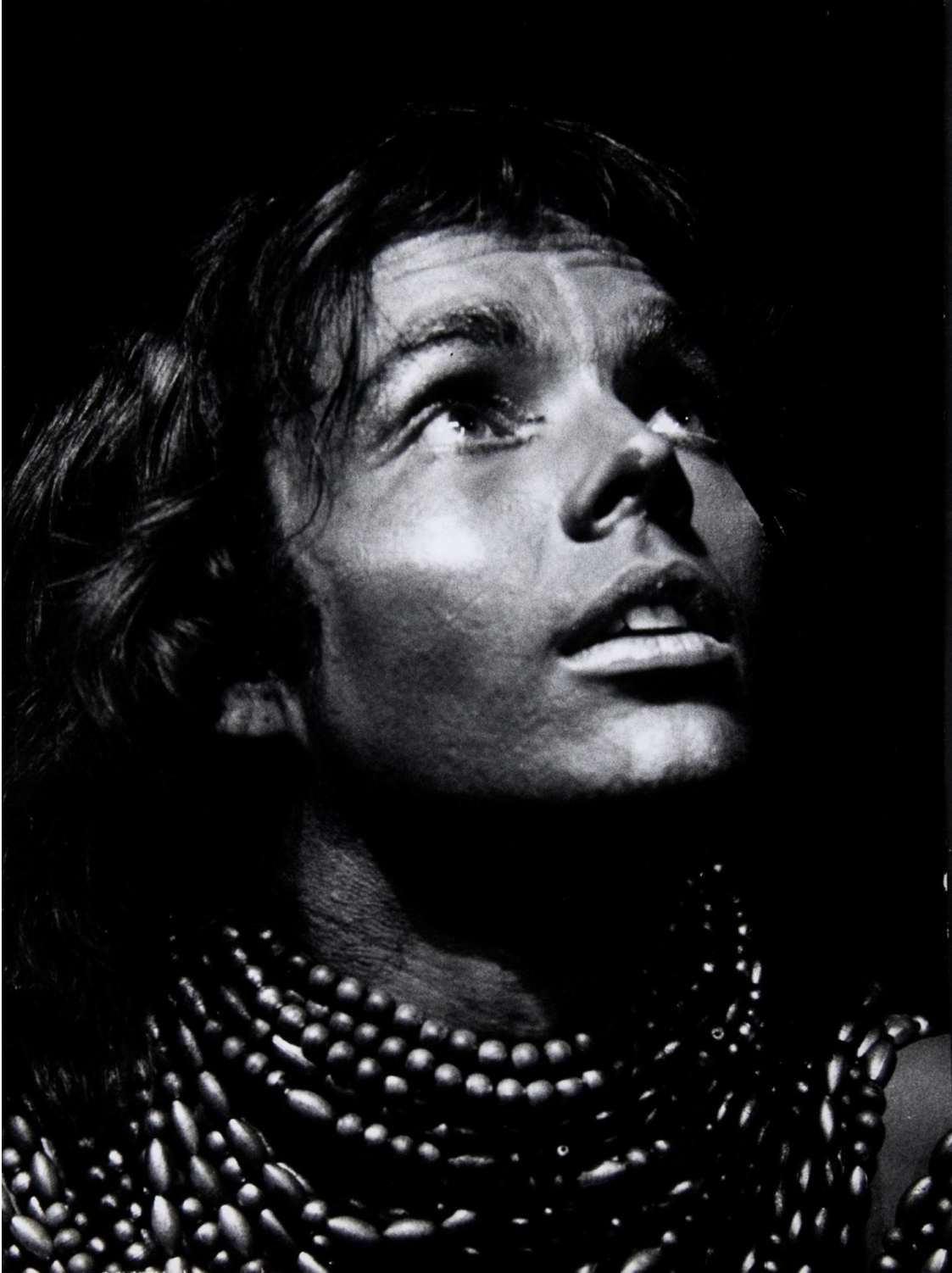


Figure 2.5 Close up of Jonathan Kent as Cleopatra. The Citizens' Theatre's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972).



Figure 2.6 Antony (John Duttine, left) and Cleopatra (Kent) embrace. The Citizens' Theatre's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972).

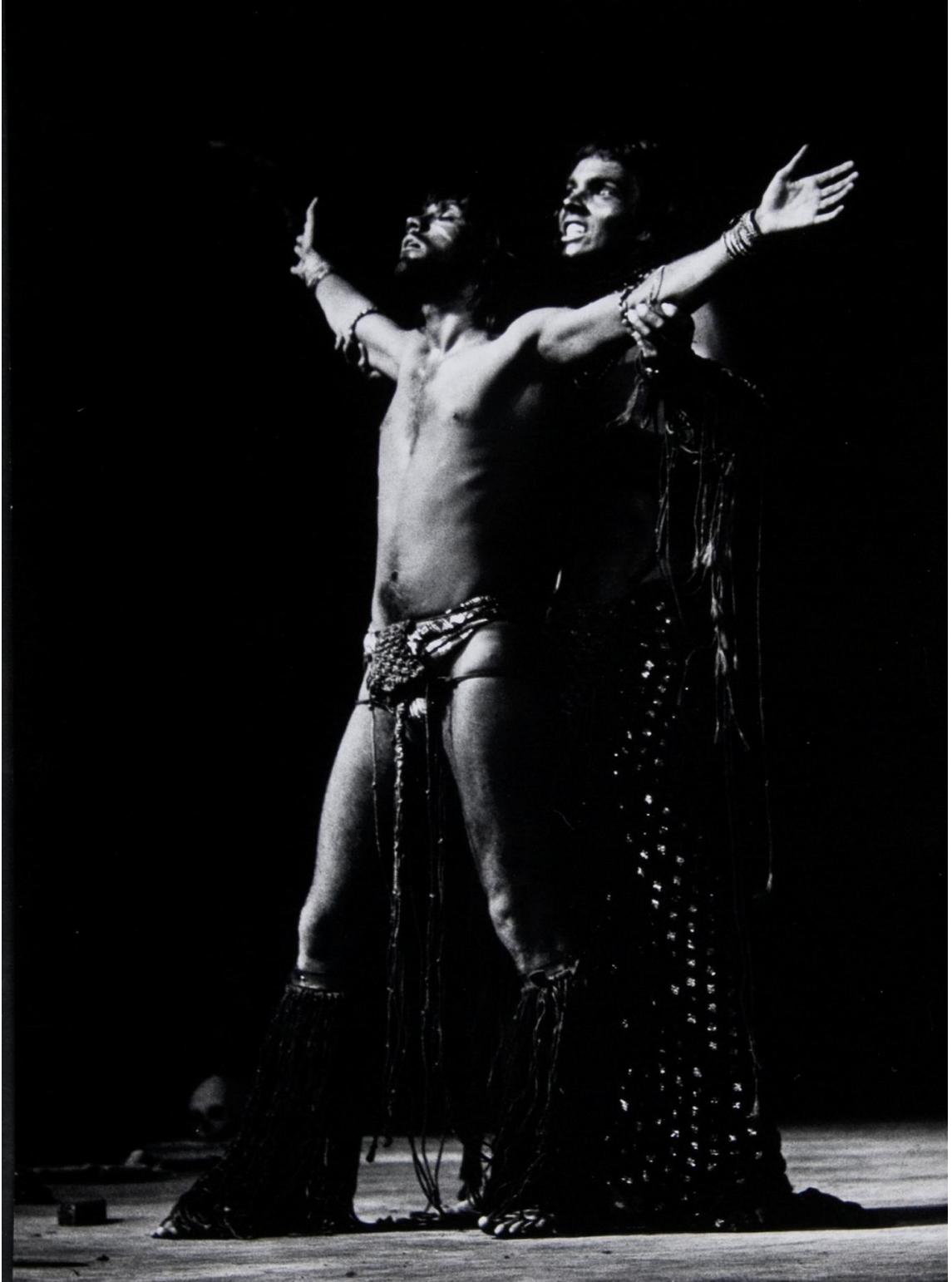


Figure 2.7 Kent's Cleopatra manipulates Duttine's Antony. *The Citizens' Theatre's Antony and Cleopatra* (1972).



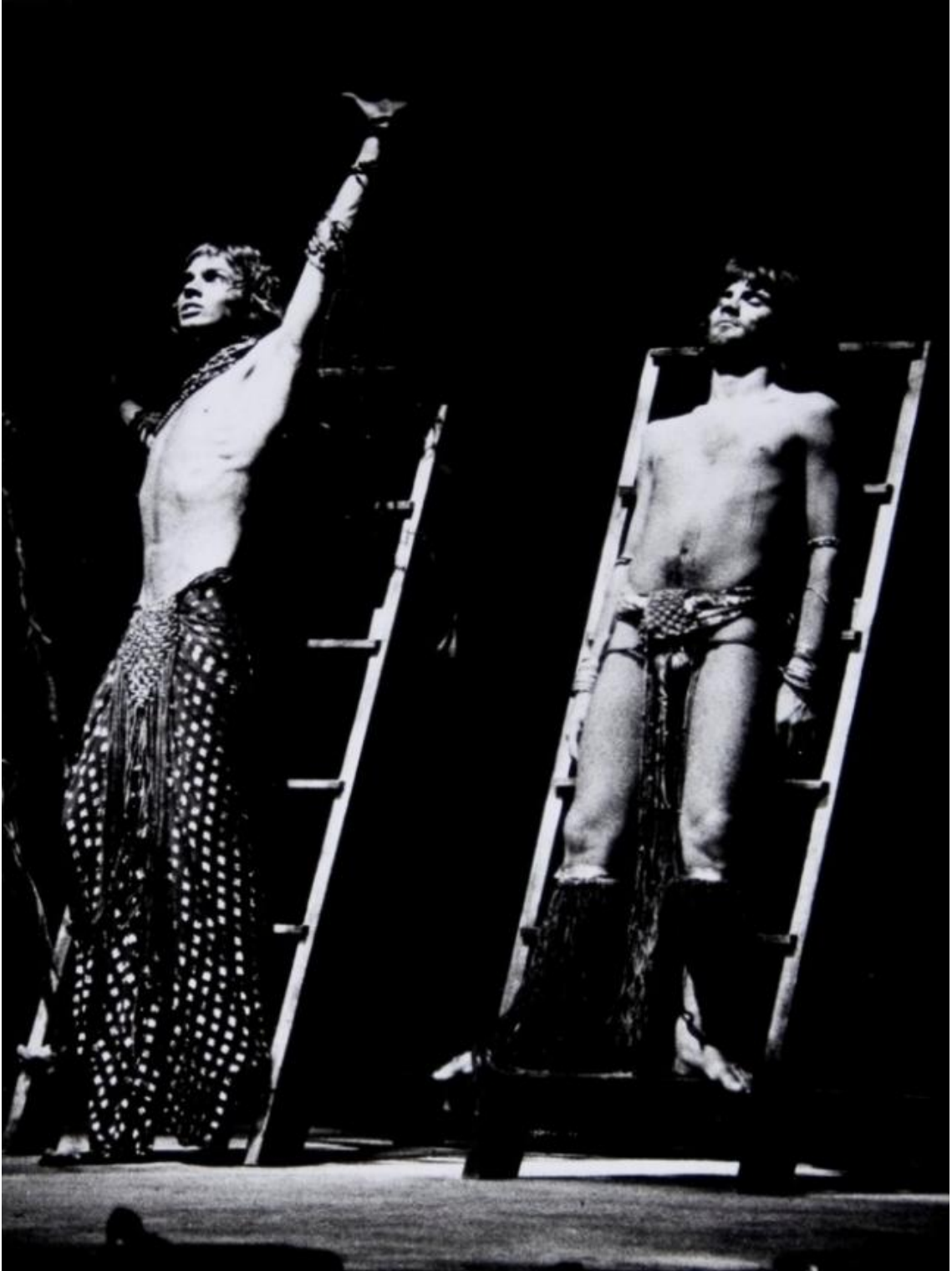
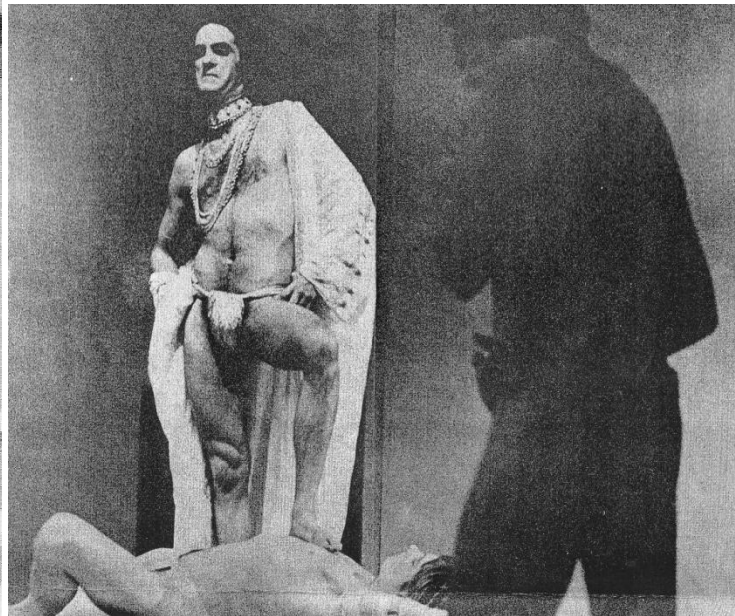


Figure 2.8 Kent as Cleopatra, Duttine as Antony. The Citizens' Theatre's *Antony and Cleopatra* (1972).



**Figure 2.9** Two views of Achilles and Patroclus. **Left:** Achilles (Mike Gwilym) on top and Patroclus (Rayner Bourton) on bottom. **Right:** Achilles (Gwilym) stands over Patroclus (Bourton) The Citizens' Theatre's *Troilus and Cressida* (1973).

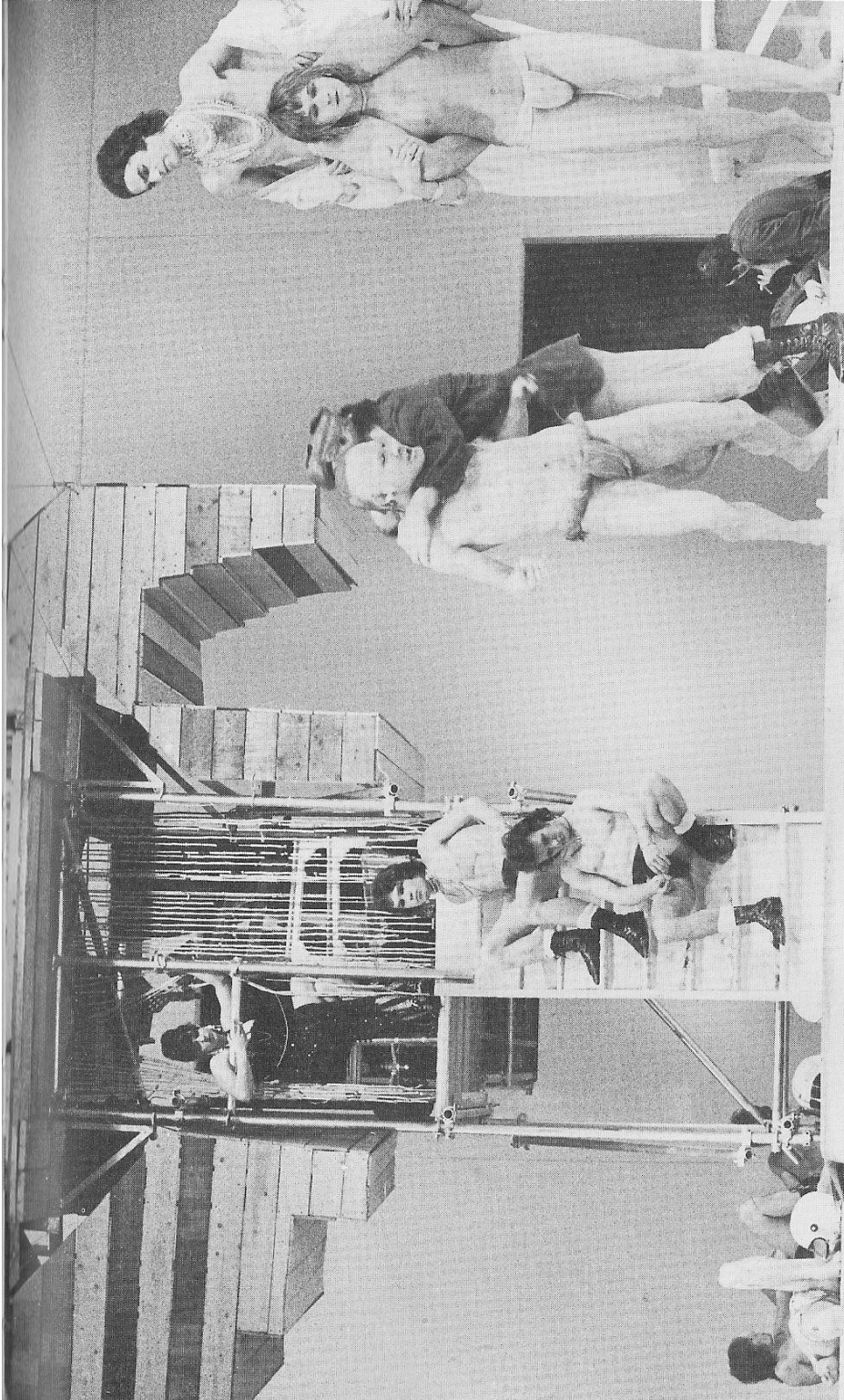


Figure 2.10 The Greek Camp. The Citizens' Theatre's *Troilus and Cressida* (1973).



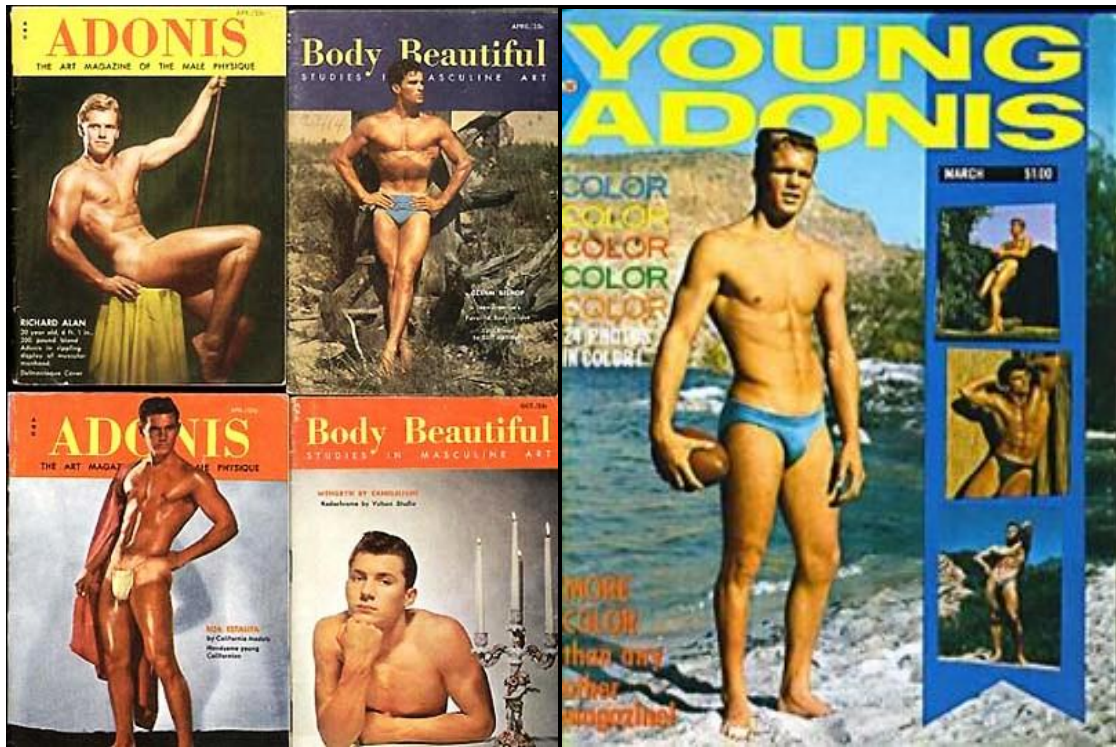


Figure 2.11 Examples of Beefcake magazine covers.



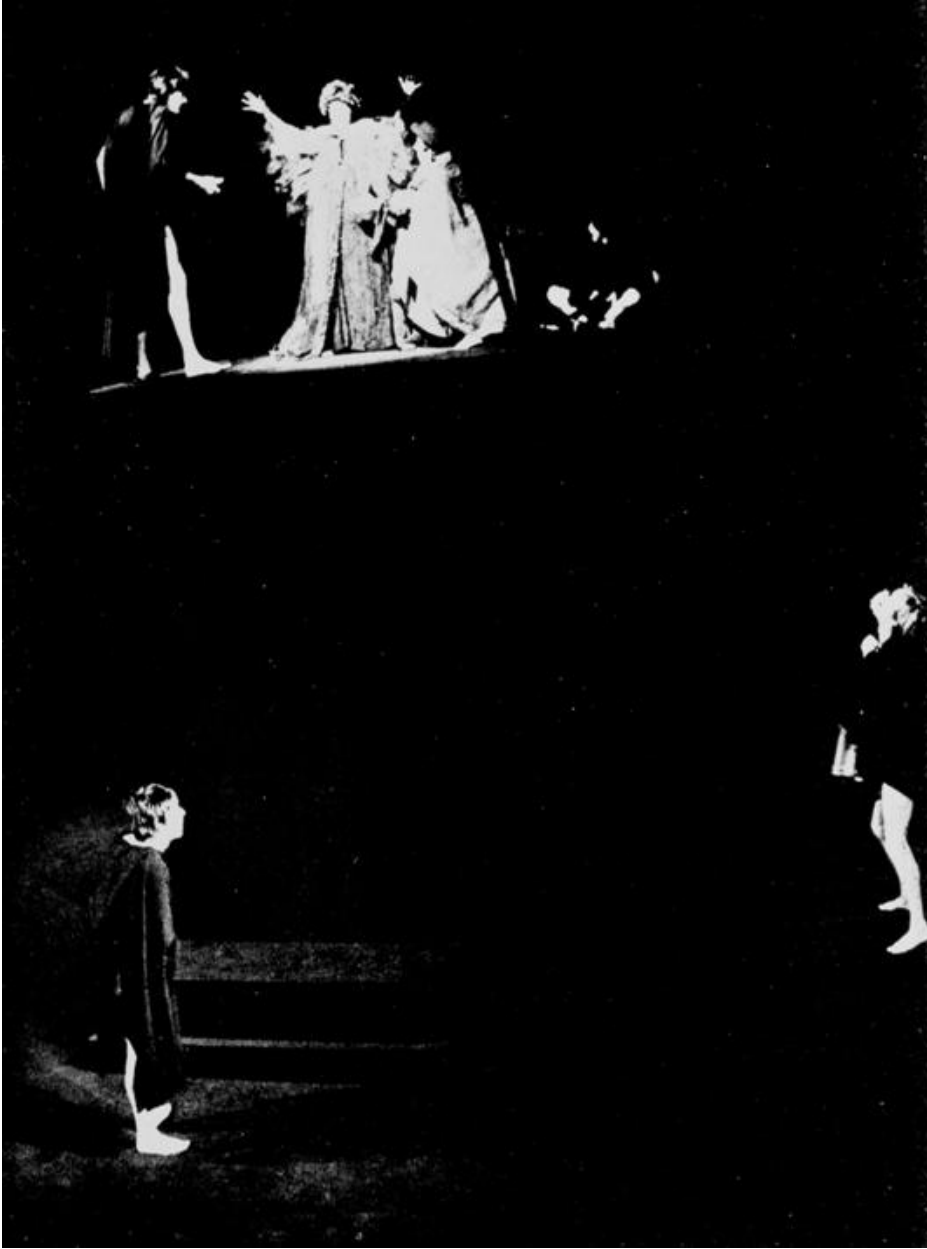


Figure 2.12 *Hamlet* (1970). Hamlet (David Hayman, right) masturbates in the opening sequence.

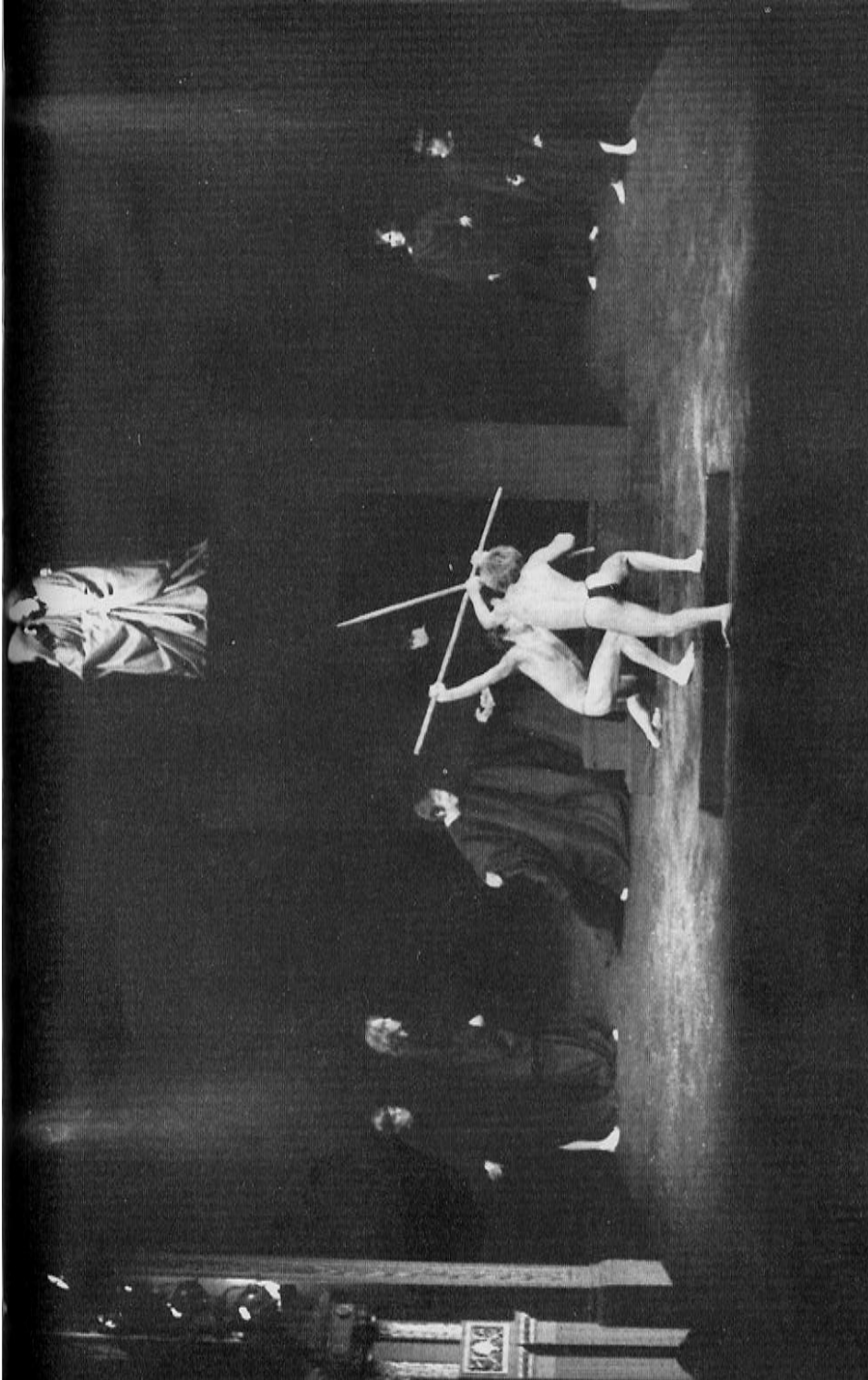
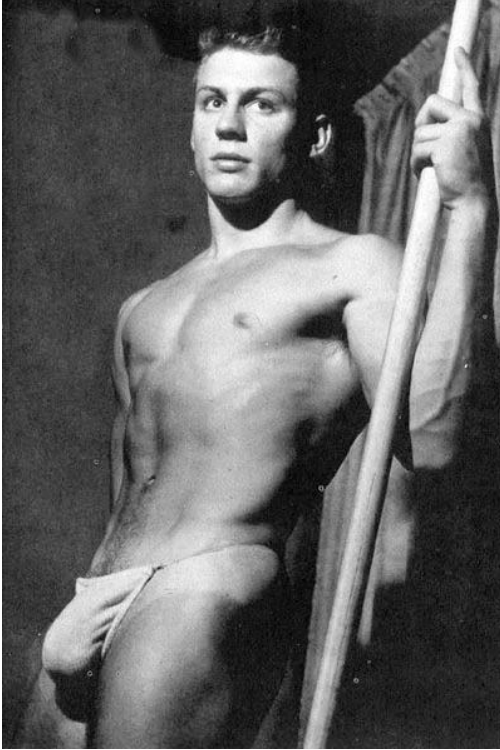


Figure 2.13 Posing strap fight scene. Laertes (Mike Gwilym, left) and Hamlet (Hayman, right) (1970).



**Figure 2.14** Beefcake magazine models from the 1950s and 1960s. Wooden staffs and scenes of physical domination.

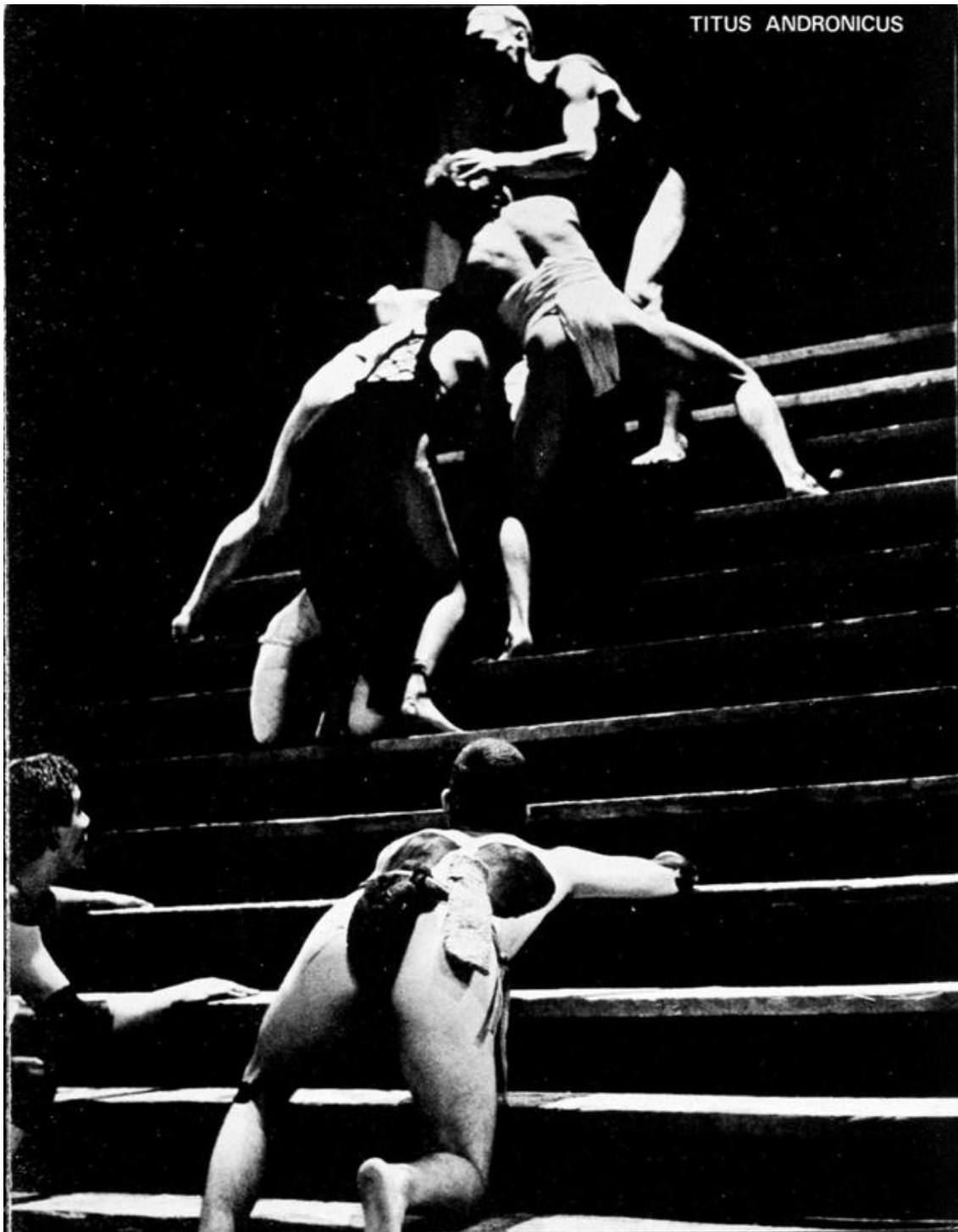


Figure 2.15 Incorporating violence and posing straps in *Titus Andronicus* (1971).

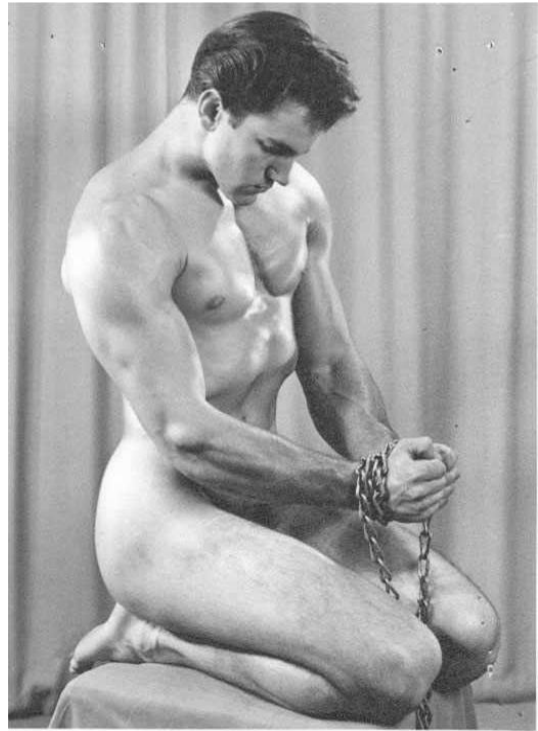
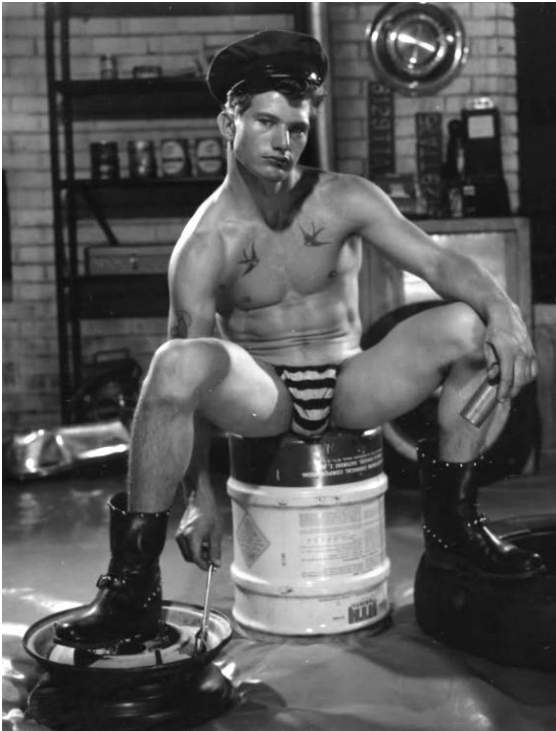
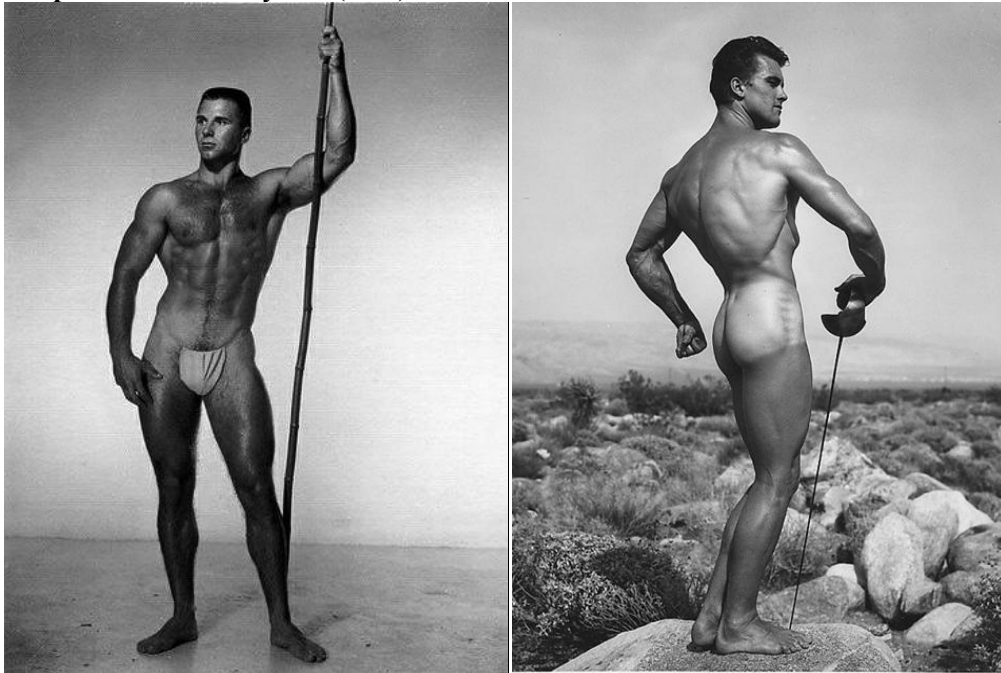


Figure 2.16 More beefcake photos from the 1950s and 1960s. The connection of submission, danger, and eroticism.



**Figure 2.17** Four actors in posing straps. From left, Mark Lewis, Rupert Frazier, Paul Bentall, and Philip Bloomfield in *Thyestes* (1975).



**Figure 2.18** More beefcake poses from the 1950s and 1960s.





**Figure 2.19** *Antony and Cleopatra* in *After Dark* (November 1976). Cleopatra and Antony (Kent and Duttine) in the back, Octavius (Mike Gwilym, center) in the front flanked by a female and male chorus (Angela Chadfield and Geoff Lerway) (1972).

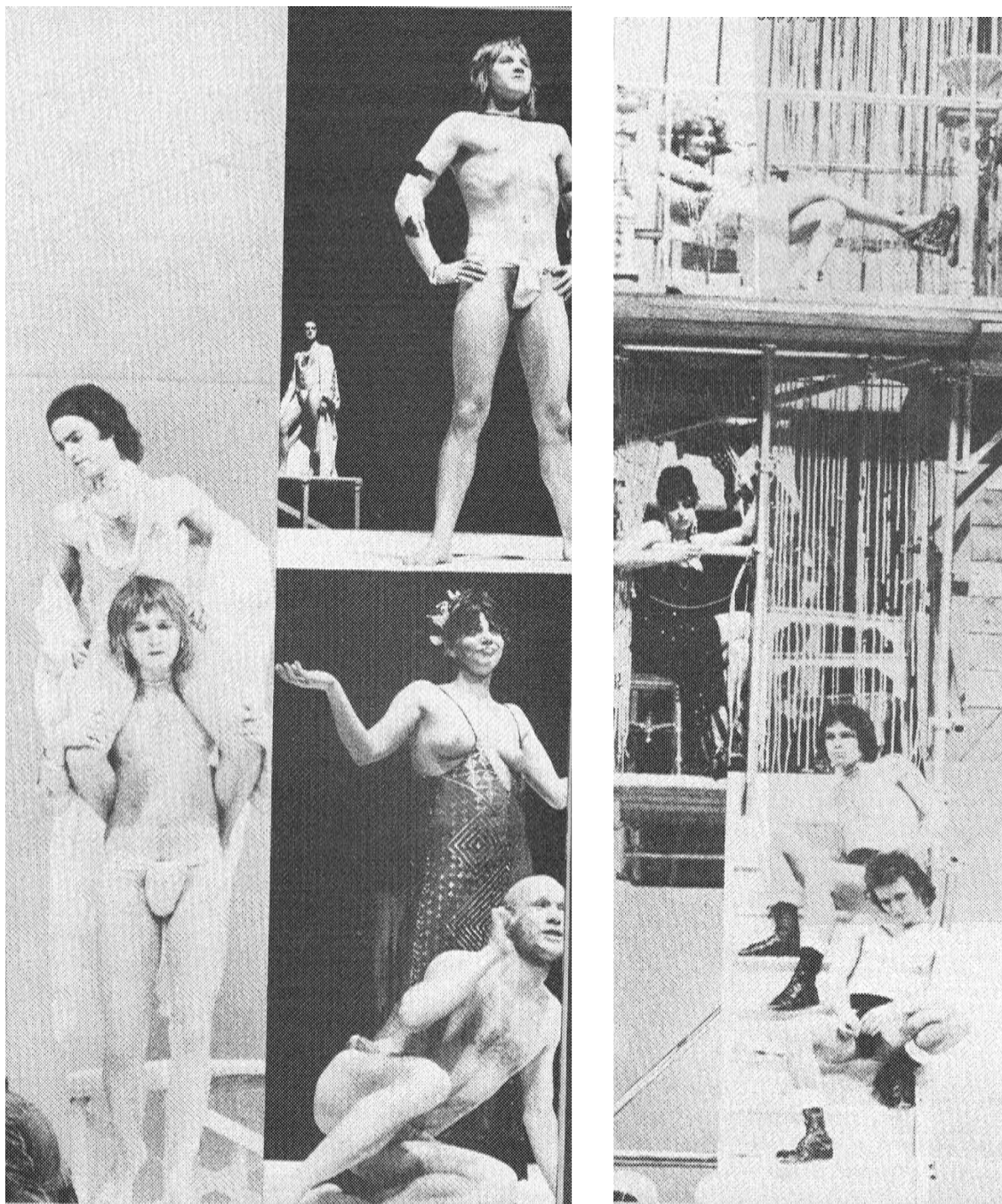


Figure 2.20 *Troilus and Cressida* in *After Dark* (November 1976). Left, Achilles (Mike Gwilym) tops Patroclus (Rayner Bourton). Center top, Achilles smolder at Patroclus. Center bottom, Cressida (Angela Chadfield) and Thersites (Jeremy Blake). Left, Helen (Di Trevis) and Cressida look down at Hector (David Yelland) and Troilus (David Hayman) sitting on the stairs.



### Chapter Three:

#### Looking Queer: Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*

The previous chapter examined the theatrical aesthetics employed by Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre Company in the early 1970s that formed the foundation of modern queer Shakespeare. This chapter approaches Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (Declan Donnellan, 1991, revival 1994; see figure 3.1) in a similar manner; however, whereas the previous analysis relied entirely on archival remnants, this chapter proposes assertions based on observations of the actual performance, viewed as a video at the Theatre Museum in Covent Garden.<sup>1</sup> Despite this change in perspective and method, the result sought here is analogous: to reveal queer moments in Donnellan's production of *As You Like It* in order to document the history of queer Shakespeare in performance.

I approach this task by recovering those aspects of the production that resonate with queer meaning now, years after the initial performance, and placing those components within the context of gay referents and the Citz's production style. Connecting Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* with the Citz's queer aesthetic, while also noting their significant differences, I highlight the theatrical influence of the Citz' on Cheek by Jowl. At the same time, my analysis underscores the ways in which

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<sup>1</sup> The Theatre Museum in Covent Garden closed in 2007, replaced by the V&A Theatre Collections in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington in March 2009. The tape I saw recorded a performance at the Albery Theatre on February 11, 1995 as part of the United Kingdom's National Video Archive of Performances. When I write of audience response to particular moments in Cheeky by Jowl's production, then, I refer to what I discerned from watching the tape and I rely as well on review discourse.

Donnellan's *As You Like It* deviates from that earlier instance of queer Shakespeare by returning to performance strategies and theatrical aesthetics previously used to discuss the Citz'.

From the start, Donnellan's all-male production indicates that it will not adhere to standard conventions of the modern theater. But neither does it adhere to the in-your-face nudity and explicit sexualization favored by the Citz'. The lights dim and 14 men enter from up-stage in a single-file line.<sup>2</sup> Their costumes are simple; all actors dress in identical white shirts with black trousers, suspenders, and shoes. They march in a circle around the perimeter, spreading to positions dispersed evenly across the stage. Suddenly, Michael Gardiner steps forward and announces, "All the world's a stage and all the men [a slight pause while 11 men move stage right] and women [another slight pause while Adrian Lester and Simon Coates step stage left] merely players."<sup>3</sup> Gardiner waits for the audience to stop giggling and continues, "They have their exits and their entrances, and one man [slight look to the left] in his time plays many parts" (141-142). The company marches off stage and the play begins.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Because I watched a video of the revival production, when I use an actor's name, I refer to the revival cast. It is not my intention to privilege the revival production over the original; I simply follow theatrical convention (and common sense) in referencing the cast I saw.

<sup>3</sup> This passage is from *As You Like It* II.vii.139-40. I shall cite subsequent lines from the performance parenthetically, using line numbers from *The Norton Shakespeare*, one-volume edition, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997). However, I unless I indicate otherwise, the lines I cite were spoken in performance – the textual citation is only to help provide a reference for those readers who did not see the production, not as a confirmation of the written word's authority.

<sup>4</sup> The relationship between words and actions can be complicated, especially given the diverse array of performance genres, including stage plays, performance art, rituals, and cultural actions. My attempt to differentiate between written word and bodies on stage requires a specialized vocabulary. Barbara Hodgdon, for example, has used the phrase "performance text" while Richard Schechner describes "theatrical performance." For this chapter, "performance" and "production" encompass both the written work as enacted by Cheek by Jowl's company and the non-scripted moments that are integral to the theatrical event. When I refer to the "play" or "text", I indicate the written word.

Despite their differences in costuming (no jockstraps here), this choreographed moment situates Donnellan's production as a dramaturgical descendent of Citz's Shakespeare in the early 1970s. By staging the separation of the sexes with such theatrical self-consciousness, Donnellan acknowledges his production's connection to the theatrical tradition of cross-gendered casting – but he also distinguishes his use of it from previous instances. Lester and Coates step to the left after Gardiner suggests that on this stage, the “women” are merely players; thereby, they prepare the audience to accept their reentry as Rosalind and Celia, female characters. This move deliberately invokes the early modern historical past, when males played female roles; it alludes, in effect, to the return to an old practice, but with a new twist. As well, the opening sequence pays homage to the comedic Panto Dame in traditional Christmas pageants, where female impersonation was used for comic effect. It also suggests the more recent past at the Citz', where Giles Havergal retooled “radical drag” (a form of street theater) for the theatrical stage. However, Lester and Coates' resulting performances are dissimilar from early modern teenage boys as “squeaking” Cleopatras, mature males playing campy female caricatures in 20<sup>th</sup> century Pantomimes, and the Citz's radicalized practice, which exaggerates iconic masculine and feminine features. Instead, Donnellan suggests that for Lester and Coates to portray Rosalind and Celia is as easy as taking a step to the left; as a result, casting across genders becomes an explicitly performative act.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For more on gender performativity see Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theater Journal* 40.1 (Spring, 1988): 519-31, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990, reprinted 1999), and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge: New York and London, 1993). Butler argues that society culturally constructs sex, gender, and sexuality as fixed categories through a series of repeated actions. The performance of gender, sex, and sexuality, however, is

Donnellan's *As You Like It* explicitly employs cross-gender casting, a Renaissance theatrical practice turned controversial by the Citz', as a queer strategy. I will argue that it is cross-gender casting itself that provides the condition of possibility for Cheek by Jowl's queering of *As You Like It*. All subsequent analysis of the production builds upon this casting choice. However, a queer performance also relies on more than just the fact of all-male performance. Like the Citz's, Donnellan's production employs several points of queer reference, including lesbian and gay communal practices, personages, and spaces, the inclusion of lesbian and gay characters, and allusions to moments that resonate specifically with lesbian and gay subjects. However, the production re-signifies these referents as constitutive of queer Shakespearean performance.

As with the Citz' productions, the performance strategies employed by Cheek by Jowl often layer over one another, forming a *mélange* of meanings, some discernible and some hidden. Donnellan's *As You Like It* emblemizes gay culture in the 1990s. Additionally, it challenges the idea of history as fixed by infusing gay and lesbian presence across the bounds of time. Finally, Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* heralds a Renaissance of queer cross-gendered Shakespearean performance on post-millennial stages.

## Men Playing Women

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not a voluntary choice; instead, Butler locates the construction of the gendered, sexed, desiring subject within "regulative discourses," "disciplinary regimes," and "frameworks of intelligibility," which then decide what possibilities of sex, gender, and sexuality will appear to be culturally "normal" or "natural" (*Gender Troubles*, 137). The sexed body, once established as a "natural" and unquestioned "fact," likewise influences constructions of gender and sexuality.

Historically, the tradition of the “transvestite stage” (young males playing female roles) helped make *As You Like It* funny for audiences and compelling for scholars of early modern sexuality.<sup>6</sup> After 1660, when Charles II lifted the restriction against women on the public stage, cross-gender casting became more or less an antiquated practice. It remained common enough at all-boys’ and all-girls’ schools, and even resurfaced on the professional stage as part of Pantomime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but was regarded mostly as a relic of days past. In fact, when Ben Greet directed a professional all-male production of *As You Like It* at the Central London YMCA in 1920 – the first such production in 250 years – he explicitly sought to reconstruct the historical past by capitalizing on the premise of recuperating original stage practices.<sup>7</sup>

However, the next professional cross-gendered production of Shakespeare broke with Greet’s suggestion that historical recreation was the only reason to present an all-male production. The National Theatre’s all-male *As You Like It* (Clifford Williams 1967, revival 1974) played across Europe and the United States to great acclaim, extolling the virtues of “the infinite beauty of Man in love – which lies at the very heart

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<sup>6</sup> For more, see Stephen Orgel, “Nobody’s Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 7-29; Jean E. Howard, “Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988): 418-40. In a later version of this argument, Howard recognizes that the split between form and content introduces more complexity into the theater’s ideological investments; see Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 128. This shift in emphasis has led Jonathan Goldberg to accuse many critics who have written on the boy-actor of recognizing only heterosexuality; see Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 105-14; Dymphna Callaghan, “The Castrator’s Song: Female Impersonation on the Early Modern Stage,” in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26.2 (1996): 321-53.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Philip Barling “Ben” Greet (1857-1936) was an English Shakespearean actor, director, and producer whose work emphasized a return to Shakespeare’s original texts in simplified productions (in contrast to the often elaborate and heavily edited presentations fashionable in this era). Greet toured North America with great success with the “Elizabethan Stage Society of England” from 1902 to 1914, and staged performances at Harvard University, in Theodore Roosevelt’s White House, and was a mainstay of the Chautauqua Circuit. From 1914-18 he was director of the Old Vic Theatre in London, making it a center for Shakespearean performance.

of *As You Like It*.<sup>8</sup> Yet Williams staunchly rejected the notion that his casting of men in women's roles in this romantic comedy might be affirmative of homosexuality. Instead, Williams argued that his production embodied Jan Kott's idea of "eroticism free from the limitations of the body... a dream of love free from the limitations of sex. It is for this reason that I employ a male cast, so that we shall not – entranced by the surface reality – miss the interior truth."<sup>9</sup> Even though his production represented a shift from cross-gendered casting as historical recreation to all-male casts in a modern, conceptual context, Williams' production nonetheless seemed more aligned with the performative traditions of Panto, and it was lauded chiefly for its comedic effect.<sup>10</sup>

As argued in the previous chapter, in 1970 the Citz' brought radical drag – with its explicitly gay connotations – to the theatrical stage. In a move contra to Williams' idea of eroticism free from the body, the Citz' politicized all-male casts by introducing an overtly sexual context to the embodied practice of cross-gender casting. For the Citz', though, cross-gender casting was simply one of many strategies intended to elicit a visceral response and to make Shakespeare more appealing to modern audiences. Cross-gender casting at the Citz', in short, was neither more nor less important than the other queer aesthetics upon which the company relied.

Cheek by Jowl, however, moves beyond "radical drag" and radicalizes cross-gender casting, presenting it as akin to – but definitely different from – the styles that

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<sup>8</sup> Clifford Williams, *As You Like It* program notes, 1967. Williams' "Man in love" is a metaphor for humanity in a spiritually transcendental state, and he argues that the Forest of Arden is akin to Heaven on Earth, a place that "transcends sensuality in the search for poetic sexuality." For more of Williams' comments, see the National Theater website, <http://www.nationaltheater.org.uk/?lid=4000>

<sup>9</sup> Williams, *As You Like It* program notes, 1967.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in one of his earliest roles, Anthony Hopkins's Audrey yodeled and resembled a big, blond Brünhilde.

preceded it. Donnellan's use of cross-gender performance does not follow Greet's historical model, and rejects the Music Hall tradition of comic exaggeration and mugging. Moreover, Donnellan disregards the Panto and Citz's practice of mixing regular-gender with cross-gender casting (e.g., using Jonathan Kent as Cleopatra and Angela Chadfield as a female chorus in the same production of *Antony and Cleopatra*). Instead, Donnellan's actors suggest fluidity and ambiguity – closer almost to the appearances of the Citz's Achilles and Patroclus, a *mélange* of masculine and feminine characteristics. As well, Cheek by Jowl's cross-gender cast actors downplayed the flamboyance of some Citz' performers (notably Kent's Cleopatra), in favor of a style of performance that suggested a porosity to gender boundaries.

For example, upon first glance, Simon Coates and Adrian Lester appear as almost any Celia or Rosalind might. Long strands of pearls hang around both actors' necks, with matching earrings, and both wear silk frocks: Celia in red, Rosalind in blue (see figure 3.2). However, although Rosalind dons a matching blue scarf as a headband, neither actor wears a wig nor attempts to appear explicitly female – either in the exaggerated, hyper-feminine way of drag queens or in the passing-sense of transvestites with more conventionally female attire. Instead, both actors use feminine gestures and soft touches to suggest their femaleness. Rather than clumping around the stage as they did in the opening montage, Lester and Coates as Rosalind and Celia move lightly. They carry their elbows close to their bodies, stroking one another's arms and legs rather than poking or striking. They giggle girlishly, lounge on the floor, and in their first scene, Rosalind brushes Celia's hair. This offers a sharp contrast to the violent altercation between

Orlando and Oliver that immediately preceded this quiet moment, and highlights their difference.

Nevertheless, even though they move as “women” (or, women on theatrical stages) do, Lester and Coates do not attempt to pass for female. Neither Lester nor Coates wears prosthetic breasts or hip pads, and the production does not attempt to conceal the maleness of the two female leads – their shoulders are broader than their hips and their Adam’s apples clearly show. In addition, their make-up is minimal, and their bodies are bigger than a typical female Rosalind or Celia. Therefore, though their actions might suggest that they are females (e.g., each speaks with a falsetto, rather than tenor), Lester and Coates’ bodies remain fundamentally male. However, neither do they accentuate their masculinity, a tactic common at the Citz’; instead, Lester and Coates simply act Rosalind and Celia with little overt regard for gender. In this way, their performances imply that how one performs gender relies on the duplication of socially constructed, repeated actions.

Here we have a real-time performance of Shakespeare’s text in which biological men play women’s roles. By loosening the constraints of a text-based, culturally reinforced binary, in this production gender is both performed and performative. Rosalind and Celia are female, but without bodies that match; that is, the actors perform the gender but not the attendant secondary characteristics. They wear dresses, a culturally assigned signifier/act that indicates their sex and gender, yet the bodies that bear those dresses do not match up with the framework of intelligibility that society, and the audience specific to the performance, may anticipate. They defy expectation and their performance inserts a disjunction between sex and gender.



According to some scholars, *Cheek by Jowl*'s approach to cross-gender casting reflects a theatrical convention that the audience accepts without reservation, and thus is completely unremarkable. Carol Chillington Rutter, for instance, asserts, "Cross-dressing was...no more sensational, anxious, or transgressive when practiced by the Chamberlain's Men in 1601 than by *Cheek by Jowl* in 1991."<sup>11</sup> Rutter is half-right here: Donnellan seemingly intends for his actors' genders to be unremarkable, a product of performance. However, Rutter's argument effectively erases Lester and Coates's differences by disallowing the importance or effect of those differences (height, race, gender, aesthetics, and age) on the audience. Following Rutter's reasoning, Lester's Rosalind (6'2", black, male) should have elicited neither more nor less sexual anxiety and/or erotic desire from spectators than any other actor (male or female) playing Rosalind: but this was decidedly not the case.

In fact, *Cheek by Jowl*'s cross-gender casting incited considerable controversy among the mainstream review community. Charles Spencer confesses to being a "hetero viewer feeling decidedly uncomfortable" when presented with such "disturbing sexual ambiguity."<sup>12</sup> The privileging of a stable sexual identity, presumptively "hetero," is implicit in Spencer's review. It privileges the experience of the "hetero viewer" by centralizing Spencer's sexual identity and reading the production in response to that identity, a response he describes as "decidedly uncomfortable." More openly hostile and perhaps invoking Williams' earlier all-male production, Jack Tinker declares,

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<sup>11</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter, *Enter the Body: Women and Representation on Shakespeare's Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Spencer, Review of *As You Like It*, *Daily Telegraph*, December 6, 1991.

This is simply director Declan Donnellan vainly seeking the ‘homo-erotic’ theories of Jan Kott, the mad Polish professor... Thus among the other twee-for-two touches, Celia tenderly kisses and nibbles Rosalind’s legs and Jaques, a closeted gay, embraces the same ‘girl’ in her male disguise. I quietly squirmed.<sup>13</sup>

Tinker’s review evinces several varieties of angst about gender and sexual ambiguity.

His conflation of vanity, madness, academia, and ‘homo-erotic’ theories implies a connection between sanity, normalcy, heterosexuality, and an authorized, English Shakespeare. His dismissive use of scare quotes (‘homo-erotic’ and ‘girl’) and his lispng disavowal of the production’s significance (“twee-for-two touches”) further advertises Tinker’s own hetero bias.

This is not to suggest that all critics responded antagonistically to Donnellan’s novel handling of cross-gender casting. Kenneth Hurren calls the production, “Shakespeare’s dazzling essay on sexual confusions ... a timely intrusion into the gathering cacophony of homophobia [that] threatens to overwhelm us.”<sup>14</sup> The wording of “sexual confusions” notwithstanding, Hurren’s response helps highlight a culture of homophobia into which this production opened, as well as the societal fear to which this production, in large part, responded. John Peters exclaims, “Donnellan’s production reveals that *As You Like It* is not about sexuality--hetero-, homo-, bi-, or trans--but about love.”<sup>15</sup> For Peters, the gender of the actors and their object-choices is secondary to the timelessness of the play’s message. On the other end of the political spectrum, Nicholas de Jongh, a noted theater historian, AIDS advocate, and gay activist, finds the production

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<sup>13</sup> Jack Tinker, Review of *As You Like It*, *Daily Mail*, December 5, 1991.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Hurren, Review of *As You Like It*, *Mail on Sunday*, December 8, 1991. *As Mail on Sunday* is the Sunday edition of *Daily Mail*, I read Hurren’s review as a response to Tinker’s review three days earlier.

<sup>15</sup> Peters, *Sunday Times*, December 8, 1991.

“without quite sufficient magic insight or sexual courage in its breaking of the gender barriers.”<sup>16</sup> For de Jongh, the individual performances and the production as a whole did not go far enough to further a queer political agenda, especially at a time when British conservatives were eroding gay and lesbian rights and rolling back social progress.<sup>17</sup>

Scholarly reviews were mostly positive, and attempted to contextualize the production’s presentation of gender as performative. Peter Holland argues, “The production allowed character to exist disassociated from performer... Gender became a construction of character and sexuality was placed within the control of character, not actor.”<sup>18</sup> Holland astutely identifies the queer implications of the production, even though he does not name it as such. Holland even maintains that the “tremendous erotic charge between Rosalind and Orlando had nothing *glibly* homoerotic about it” (my emphasis.) In addition, in one of the two explicitly queer readings of the production, James C. Bulman suggests, “In Donnellan’s staging, spectators were constantly made aware that their perception of gender was contingent and determined by performance.”<sup>19</sup> This self-conscious perception, according to Bulman, leads the audience members “to grasp the elision of heterosexual and homosexual identities and thereby to understand

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<sup>16</sup> Nicholas de Jongh, Review of *As You Like It*, *Evening Standard*, December 5, 1991.

<sup>17</sup> This erosion is most apparent in the passage of Section 28 in 1988 by Margaret Thatcher’s Parliament, which expressly prohibited local authorities in the United Kingdom from “promoting homosexuality” or “the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” See “Local Government Act 1988 (c. 9), section 28,” [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga\\_19880009\\_en\\_5.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880009_en_5.htm) (accessed July 1, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Peter Holland, *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the Stage in the 1990s* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 91.

<sup>19</sup> James C. Bulman, “Bringing Cheek by Jowl’s *As You Like It* Out of the Closet: the Politics of Gay Theater,” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 22.3 (2004): 31-46; included in *Shakespeare Re-Dressed: Cross-Gender Casting in Contemporary Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008); revised, expanded, and cited here in “Queering the Audience: All-Male Casts in Recent Productions of Shakespeare,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, ed. Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 569. The other explicitly queer critique comes from Alisa Solomon and will be discussed shortly.

how cross-dressing could subvert a heteronormative reading of the text.”<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, Bulman sets out to identify the ways in which the erasure of gender and sexual identities suggests that gender is performative and sexuality is changeable and reads the production in conjunction with 1990s gay culture. My approach differs from Bulman in scope. He focuses on Cheek by Jowl’s production in its moment of inception, reflective of fixed social history, while my analysis situates this production as a part of the larger tradition of queer theater and an antecedent to the post-millennial proliferation of cross-gendered (oftentimes queer) productions of Shakespeare.

For Cheek by Jowl’s *As You Like It*, cross-gender casting goes beyond historical re-creation and functions as a corrective in a climate of political and cultural intolerance. As evident in the range of critical responses, the production pushed spectators to confront their own ideas about gender and sexuality. Thus, cross-gender casting becomes an effective political tool, but not in the same way as practiced on the Citz’ stage. Whereas the Citz’ wanted to shock, astonish, and outrage audiences (and to entertain, celebrate, and create community) with its cross-gendered portrayals, Cheek by Jowl’s approach is lighter. Instead of using male and female characteristics as exclamation points, Cheek by Jowl treats gender as a question mark – neither expressly male, nor explicitly female, but somewhere in between. This change in aesthetic approach is a dynamic harbinger of the increasingly common view that gender is porous, mutable, and, because of this, quite often queer.

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<sup>20</sup> Bulman, “Queering,” 569.

## Celia's Sweet Rose

Within the study and performance of *As You Like It*, female same-sex eroticism frequently remains un-staged except as comic effect, such as found in Phoebe's inadvertent, unintentionally lesbian pursuit of Rosalind (disguised as Ganymede). Audience laughter often accompanies Phoebe's attempts to woo Ganymede, especially when Ganymede rejects her advances and publicly upbraids her, thus making Phoebe a scapegoat, the butt of homophobic joke. Addressing the issue of lesbian invisibility on the post-modern stage, Valerie Traub notes, "The theatricalization of *lesbian* desire in Shakespearean drama occurs far less frequently [than of male homoerotic desire]. When it does occur, it tends to depend on cross-gender casting to parody or 'modernize' Shakespeare."<sup>21</sup> Traub highlights the absence of female-female eroticism in modern productions of Shakespeare as a means by which to demonstrate the historical presence of lesbian possibility; however, one of the modern instances Traub cites is Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*.

In Shakespeare's text, the courtier Le Beau describes Celia and Rosalind as "loves dearer than the natural bond of sisters" (I.ii.265) and "like Juno's swans... coupled and inseparable" (I.iii.73-4); yet until recently, literary scholars, and theater directors, habitually overlooked the possibility that Celia and Rosalind might share an erotic

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<sup>21</sup> Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 39 (Traub's emphasis). Traub goes on to note, "We do not need to laminate a *lesbian* presence onto Shakespeare's texts; once we begin to think historically about desires and practices, we can draw homoerotic meanings out of them. The point is not to deploy a discourse of authenticity to trump 'trendy' postmodernism, nor to populate the Shakespearean stage with women whose desires are intelligible only through the idioms of the present. To invoke if only to reconceptualize the title of the ground-breaking anthology *Queering the Renaissance*: it is less a question of queering the past than of discovering the terms by which the past articulated its own queerness" (40, Traub's emphasis).

connection. Denise A. Whalen contends, “A decade ago [in 1995], the consensus among scholars was that while early modern literary forms carried representations of male homoeroticism, few texts of any kind, including drama, presented female homoeroticism.”<sup>22</sup> This accord has now begun to change, and critics have begun to read early modern plays in new ways, allowing for possibilities that they previously did not discuss. Within this new discourse, critics frequently cite *As You Like It* as a source of female homoeroticism;<sup>23</sup> however, by presenting lesbian affection as the root of Celia’s

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<sup>22</sup> Denise A. Whalen, *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1. Notwithstanding Whalen’s claim of critical “consensus,” see Valerie Traub, “The (In)Significance of ‘Lesbian’ Desire in Early Modern England,” in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg (Durham and New York: Duke University Press, 1994), 62-83. Traub carefully avoids applying a contemporary sense of lesbian identity to any early modern characters. All the same, she notes a tendency in these plays towards “what we might call, not a little anachronistically, ‘femme-femme love’”, which “registered as a viable and dramatically compelling, if ultimately untenable, state” (69). Among the play’s Traub discusses: John Lyly’s *Gallathea*, Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare and John Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, James Shirley’s *The Bird in a Cage*, and Margaret Cavendish’s *The Convent of Pleasure*. For her part, Whalen goes on to point out that in light of work by Martha Vicinus, Lillian Faderman, Marilyn Farwell, and Terry Castle, literary critics have begun inquiring into early modern female homoeroticism in terms of its historical and cultural specificity. These studies look at queer virginity, Amazons, and Sapphic representations. For more see Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), Kathryn Schwartz, *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters with the English Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), and Harriette Andreadis, *Sappho in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> For example, Traub argues in “The (In)Significance of ‘Lesbian’ Desire,” that “Celia’s speeches to Rosalind” are “as erotically compelling as anything spoken in the heterosexual moments... This eroticism, however, does not depend upon a cross-dressed figure like Rosalind who is not, in fact, the enunciator of homoerotic desire, but instead depends upon the ‘feminine’ Celia” (71). Carl Miller calls Rosalind’s rejection of Celia “the great lesbian Shakespeare betrayal.” Carl Miller, *Stages of Desire: Gay Theatre’s Hidden History* (London: Cassell 1996): 91. Miller finds Rosalind’s actions in Arden unforgivable, noting, “She attains heterosexual marriage after a spell as a gay man, but at the expense of the woman who loves her” (91). Mario DiGangi revisits Ovid’s mythology to read Rosalind’s rejection of Celia as a part of a wedding ritual. DiGangi suggests that as Rosalind dons the disguise of Ganymede, so too do her affections begin to switch from Celia to Orlando. Thus, according to DiGangi, the marriages at the end of the play “succeed to the extent that premarital female homoerotic desire and postmarital male homoerotic desire have been successfully banished.” Mario DiGangi, “Queering the Shakespearean Family,” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.3 (Autumn, 1996), 271. Alternately, see DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge, 1997) and Julie Crawford, “The Homoerotics of Shakespeare’s Elizabethan Comedies,” in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works, Volume III: The Comedies*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005) 137-158.

attachment to Rosalind, Donnellan queers the central female-female relationship in the play.

Insinuated among their declarations of devotion to one another, it seems clear that Coates's Celia is in love with Lester's Rosalind. The actors' male bodies notwithstanding, the female characters share a mutually loving, physically intimate connection. In fact, when the action of the play starts, Coates and Lester portray Celia and Rosalind as a loving, affirmative lesbian couple. The first time they appear on stage as Celia and Rosalind, Coates lifts Lester's skirt and repeatedly nibbles on Lester's calf (see figure 3.3). It is a playful gesture, but also an erotic one, filled with sexual energy as Celia's gentle bites turn to kisses. Throughout the scene, Coates clutches Lester's hands in his own and begs, "My sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry" (I.ii.21-22). The sweet, the dear, the rose: all perhaps suggest erotic intimacy, especially as Celia fondles Rosalind and Rosalind strokes Celia's hair.

In Donnellan's production, love becomes an active verb that describes the depth of Celia's affection. Clinging to Lester and speaking with a voice filled with emotion, Coates admonishes, "Herein I see thou lov'st me not with the full weight that I love thee" (I.ii.7-8). In addition to love, "weight" becomes a suggestive term, perhaps even leading some viewers to imagine Coates on top of Lester in an ardent embrace. The repetition and context of the word "love" further clarifies Celia's position as she urges Rosalind to "love no *man* in good earnest" (25-6, Coates's emphasis). As well, both actors repeatedly spit in unison whenever someone mentions the word "man." Disregarding bodily boundaries, both actors convey an erotic charge that is tangible when Le Beau

(Sean Francis) observes, with an eyebrow lifted for emphasis, that Celia and Rosalind “are dearer than the natural bond of sisters” (260-1).

Even as Rosalind’s feelings begin to change in this production, Celia remains constant in her affection. At the wrestling match between Charles and Orlando (Paul Kissaun and Scott Handy; see figure 3.4), Celia grows increasingly agitated with Rosalind’s obvious interest in Orlando. The scene repeats an earlier action, with Lester’s head laying in Coates’s lap, but this time Rosalind buries her face out of fear for Orlando’s life, not out of love for Celia. As Lester’s praise of Orlando grows more effusive and enthusiastic, Coates becomes more and more frustrated, eventually pinching Rosalind as if to say, “Snap out of it!” This frustration registers as jealousy, and will continue to affect Coates’s exchanges with Lester for the remainder of the play (see figures 3.5 & 3.6).

The most pronounced moment of lesbian affection, however, comes immediately after the wrestling match, as Duke Frederick (David Hobbs) prepares to banish Rosalind for treason. Celia ardently defends Rosalind, and stands up to despotic Frederick. “We still have slept together,” Coates tells Hobbs, grabbing his hand. “Rose at an instant, learn’d, play’d, eat together, / And whereso’er we went, like Juno’s swans, / Still we went coupled and inseparable” (I.iii.69-72). In this production, this is the moment when Celia comes out to her father – and his response is unquestionably hostile. First, whatever the normalcy of two women sharing a bed in early modern England, to modern audiences the term “slept together” becomes more than just a term of endearment; it carries the idiomatic suggestion of a sexual relationship, especially when contextualized by Coates’s slight pause before speaking it. Secondly, Celia identifies her feelings for Rosalind



through Juno, the goddess of marriage, and through the swan, traditionally a symbol of Venus, the goddess of love. Add the phrase “coupled and inseparable” to this metaphorical amalgamation and, as Traub and DiGangi point out, Celia is effectively telling her father that she considers herself married to Rosalind. Finally, Coates’s Celia falls to her knees and desperately admits, “I cannot live out of her company” (82). In reaction, Hobbs roughly pushes Coates away with a mix of anger and disgust. His intolerance registers that he perceives Celia’s attachment to Rosalind as a threat – to Celia’s marriage prospects and to his authority at court. Although Rosalind will later forsake Celia for Orlando, Coates’s Celia remains constant in her love for Lester’s Rosalind.

By presenting Celia’s affection for Rosalind as erotic, Coates uses the various physical and verbal gestures of female intimacy to convey a lesbian affection. For some feminists, an all-male cast might seem to displace such a possibility. But in her queer reading of the production, Alisa Solomon casts her attention to the critique of heterosexuality that a male actor playing a female role allows. Connecting scholarship on early modern sexuality with Donnellan’s production, Solomon views the production as subversive of gender and sexual identities: “Cheek by Jowl queers Shakespeare, thus displacing the heterosexist assumptions at the center of traditional productions...Cheek by Jowl situates itself as an alternative to the dominant traditions.”<sup>24</sup> The “assumptions” that become displaced include the central premise of early modern comedy – that marriage is always inevitable and a desired outcome. For Solomon, Celia and Rosalind,

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<sup>24</sup> Alisa Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 42.

as characters in Shakespeare's text and as cross-gendered roles in Cheek by Jowl's production, become not so much erased or elided as re-inscribed as women who desire women. The feminist appreciation of the queer potential within the text and within the production is an important recognition of the ways lesbianism can become part of a queer theatrical aesthetic.

### Playing Gay

For Donnellan's production, the possibility of homosexuality in *As You Like It* also extends to Jaques, a role that Michael Gardiner plays as recognizably, even stereotypically, gay (see figure 3.7.)<sup>25</sup> From how he handles his cigarettes, which he meticulously retrieves from his silver case and offers to every attractive young male who passes his way, to the affectation with which he speaks his lines, Gardiner presents Jaques's melancholy as a swishy form of *ennui*. Gardiner's Jaques is vain, using his cigarette case as a compact-mirror to check and re-check his appearance. His face is painted pale with make-up, with the only slash of color at his rouged lips, and a large beauty mark dots his cheek. He does not look like any of the other men on stage, not even the men playing women. Gardiner's depiction of the gay outsider, however, is not without risk; at times, Jaques's companions recoil from him, even responding violently to his advances. Significantly, the production invites the audience to recognize Jaques as a man who is both different from everyone else and vulnerable to danger. In this way,

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<sup>25</sup> There is, as Michael Jamieson points out, a tradition of playing Jaques gay, perhaps starting with the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1961 production. "Max Adrian may have been the first actor to tinge Jaques' melancholy with homosexual desire." Michael Jamieson, "As You Like It – Performance and Reception," in *As You Like It from 1600 to the Present: Critical Essays*, ed. Edward Tomarken (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 638.

Cheek by Jowl's Jaques becomes more than just an anachronistically gay character in an early modern play (such as the Citz's presentation of Achilles and Patroclus in *Troilus and Cressida*); he enacts a living gay representation of the historical past.

The allusion extends to Gardiner's delivery of Jaques's lines; the way he speaks registers as stereotypically homosexual. He lisps his lines with elongated, drawn out vowels and hisses his sibilant consonants. He almost moans out, "More, more, I prithee more" (II.v.9.) Later, as Gardiner catalogues the ages of man, the result is both comical ("the lover, / Sighing like furnace with a woeful ballad /Made to his mistress' eyebrow" [154-6]) and poignant ("Last scene of all.../ Is second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" [170-4].) His distaste for the lover's attachment to his mistress (indicated with an eye roll and scrunched nose, disdainful lipping of "mistress") prompts the audience, albeit in a clichéd manner, to recognize his sexual preference. His extreme emotionality, a stereotype of the gay queen, comes across in "last scene of all" – Gardiner weeps as he describes old age and death. Having segregated himself from the opposite sex, Jaques's emphasis on the roles a "man" will play in his life takes on additional queer meaning.

Inasmuch as the generic conventions of comedy and the text of the play bind this production to the pursuit for heterosexual marriage, Jaques, an outsider in this heterosexual paradigm, also cruises for companions. In this, Cheek by Jowl follows the Citz's emphasis on the overt sexualization of bonds. While this production's first act focuses on the escape from Duke Frederick's Court, when the lights come up on the second act, the world has gone green with spring and love is literally in the air. Jaques, formerly depressed, now wears a matching ice cream colored hat and topcoat, and is fully

enamored with Orlando, who hangs love poems on wires suspended from the ceiling with clothespins. While Jaques's line otherwise might indicate his readiness to depart from Orlando's company ("I had as lief been myself alone" and "Let's meet as little as we can" [III.ii.259 and 262]), here Gardiner takes an unexpected approach to his lines: he plants himself in Orlando's way, smiles widely, and blocks Orlando's exit from the stage. Orlando, busy with his poetic verses, remains oblivious to Jaques's advances. Jaques, for his part, tries several other tactics to seduce Orlando. First, Gardiner disparages Rosalind and tries to get Orlando to abandon his ardor for her, pouting, "I do not like *her* name" (270, Gardiner's emphasis.) Next, Jaques compliments Orlando's appearance and intelligence to try to gain his favor, batting his eyes and sighing, "You are full of *pretty* answers" (275). Finally, Jaques propositions Orlando outright; he offers a cigarette and asks, "Will you sit down with me?" (281). Gardiner's attempts to seduce Handy fails though, and Jaques leaves the stage alone.

Gardiner presents Jaques' desire for homosexual companionship as his character's driving force, and he attempts to seduce young men continuously throughout the play. As Silvius departs after Phoebe gives him a hand job, Jaques enters, pulls a cigarette out of his case, and calls after him, "I prithee, pretty youth, let me be better acquainted with thee" (IV.i.1-2). In other productions, Jaques directs this line to Rosalind, by now in disguise as Ganymede; however, Cheek by Jowl's production sexualizes this line to transition from one scene to another series of erotic encounters. Gardiner speaks the line to stop Silvius, who returns to Jaques, smilingly takes the cigarette, and then runs off-stage. Undeterred, Jaques then turns his amorous attention to Ganymede, and Gardiner describes various kinds of melancholy as a means of explaining his own difference.

Jaques's loneliness is amplified, as he recounts the diverse categories with which he does not conform: scholar, musician, courtier, soldier, lawyer, lady, and finally lover. "It is a melancholy of mine own," admits Gardiner to Lester, "compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness" (18-22). Gardiner falls weeping into Lester's lap; however, Lester quickly stands, squares his torso, and extends a hand to shake Jaques's hand and say good-bye. Gardiner grabs Lester's hand and refuses to let go. In response, Ganymede takes Jaques's hand and places it on her/his chest, instructing him to "chide God for making you that countenance you are" (33). The audience laughs as Jaques snatches his hand off Rosalind's disguised breast. The moment highlights the opacity of gender and destabilization of sexuality this production promotes – one male recoils from the chest of another male (who is playing a woman who is impersonating a boy). The irony compounds when Rosalind/Ganymede/Lester puts her/his/his finger to her/his/his lip, as if to request Jaques/Gardiner's confidence. Is Rosalind asking Jaques to keep her secret, or is Lester asking Gardiner to keep his secret? Bulman calls this moment "a pact of homosexual kinship thus [making] Jaques complicit in maintaining Rosalind's secret."<sup>26</sup> That silence for which Rosalind solicits might connect with Ganymede's gender, Lester's sex, or anyone's on-stage sexuality – the real complicity is with the audience, whose laughter indicates approval.

When Jaques finally succeeds in his quest for sexual gratification, the encounter occurs in silence, literally in-between acts in a moment constructed solely for this

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<sup>26</sup> Bulman, "Queering," 572.

performance. As the cast moves furniture and places stage properties in preparation for the wedding scene, Gardiner lurks onstage, approaches a man standing with his back to the audience, and offers his customary cigarette. Instead of running away, however, this person extends his arm and offers to light Jaques's cigarette. It is the first time another character knowingly accepts Jaques's advances, and the first time the illicit outsider connects with another human being. When the flash of match to paper reveals Oliver (Jonathan Chesterman), who by now is engaged to Celia, the audience gasps.<sup>27</sup> In this way, Cheek by Jowl's production contextualizes silence with sex and sexuality. If Oliver (the first-born, privileged son and sole heir in a system of primogeniture) is gay or perhaps more accurately on the "down low," then the production seems to suggest that it is possible to be a queer insider only if one maintains silence about one's queerness.<sup>28</sup>

### Queering History

By self-consciously trafficking in the stereotype of the cruising queen, Cheek by Jowl's production re-positions the meaning of Jaques as an early modern melancholic for the contemporary stage. This move reflects an attempt to articulate queer presence, by appropriating gay and lesbian personages and issues where they might not otherwise be apparent. Rather than to invoke universality or timelessness, use of readily known

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<sup>27</sup> At least they did in the performance I saw. The degree of the response varies, of course, from performance to performance, but it seems clear that Donnellan intended to shock the audience with this extra-textual moment.

<sup>28</sup> I mean "down low" to indicate men who self-identify as straight, who live otherwise straight lives, often with wives and children, yet who still have gay sex, albeit in secret. Such men distinguish between their sexual identities and sexual acts. It is not my intention to attach race to the term (it has roots in the African-American community, which uses the phrase to describe African-American men), but rather to describe a sociological experience.

figures from the past to inform character is a strategy for creating a queer identification with the past. Theoretically, this process follows those critics who advocate crossing historical, literary, and cultural boundaries to arrive at queer subjectivity and identification. For example, in her study of Willa Cather, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, “For a particular gay or lesbian subject, then, to choose a figure in a different position with whom to identify even partially always has the potential for being revelatory in some way about some aspect of the positioning of the subject her- or himself.”<sup>29</sup> Lesbian and gay subjects, according to Sedgwick, commonly traverse historical and cultural boundaries to find objects with which to identify, thereby creating a subjective connection with the past. Such a move is often necessary to help document a previously unwritten, unacknowledged part of a larger social history. Although the history Cheek by Jowl invokes has, at least to some extent, already been written, re-signifying Jaques as a queer icon brings the past and the present together on the theatrical stage.

In displacing Jaques from the context of Renaissance culture into a late-millennial environment, Cheek by Jowl’s *As You Like It* enacts a non-teleological performance of history. Often times, we think of history as occurring in perpetuity, as a series of events happening on specific dates, following one after the other, beginning immemorially, traveling horizontally into the present and beyond. In reading history as non-teleological,

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<sup>29</sup> See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Across Gender, Across Sexuality: Willa Cather and Others,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 61. She goes on to suggest transhistoricism “not through a vague invocation of the commonality of all people of all genders and sexualities, though this may also be at work, but through the complex specificities of what different positionings may have in common under the contradictory definitional aegises of our century” (61). Sedgwick’s interest in identification across difference becomes an important first step in positioning queer subjectivity across different literatures and literary periods.

critics can reject the notion of a continuous seamless series, instead affording anachronistic gay, lesbian, or queer identification to historical figures, and trans-historically engaging with those figures from the past in the here and now. Present-day critics, scholars, artists, and activists can pluck these figures out of time, carry them into the present, appropriate them, and redeploy them back into some point in the past. This impulse, necessarily disjunctive and disruptive, maps more like a vertical spiral, moving upward and outward in three dimensions. Thus, it becomes possible to commune with the past metaphysically and to expand history to include otherwise irretrievable narratives.

Especially in its representation of Jaques, Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* performs the past in the service of the present. Depending on who is watching the performance, Gardiner's Jaques might invoke any variety of old queens. He might stand in for effete British playwright Noël Coward.<sup>30</sup> Alternatively, he might bring to mind John Gielgud, who was arrested cruising the toilets of London in 1953,<sup>31</sup> or perhaps Dirk

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<sup>30</sup> Bulman, "Queering," 571.

<sup>31</sup> On the night of October 21, 1953, the London police arrested John Gielgud for "homosexual importuning" in Chelsea and ordered him to appear before a magistrate the following morning. In the arrest record, he gave his name as "Arthur Gielgud, 49, a clerk, of Cowley Street Westminster." He pled guilty, apologized, and paid the £10 fine. He had followed the usual custom of the time of giving a false job description in the hope that the press would not notice the incident but instead of giving a false name, another common practice, the best that he could think to do was to give his first name as Arthur. (Alec Guinness had used the name "Herbert Pocket" when police arrested him on a similar charge in 1946.) The desk sergeant tried to help keep the matter out of the papers and asked the morning magistrate to come in early; unfortunately, a journalist from the *Evening Standard* was in the court and a story appeared in the lunchtime edition under the banner "Sir John Gielgud fined: See your doctor the moment you leave here." Although his career did not suffer, his arrest led to a public outcry (fueled by the British press) against the "homosexual menace."



Bogarde's portrayal of the anguished Gustav von Aschenbach in Visconti's *Death in Venice*.<sup>32</sup>

I want to argue, however, that Gardiner's Jaques alludes to a specific queer icon: Oscar Wilde. The costume choices support this possibility, with a late Victorian aesthetic suggested in the characters' morning coats and bowler hats. Gardiner even wears Wilde's familiar haircut, parted in the middle with long bangs and sides. Beyond physical similarities, Gardiner's obsession with his own appearance, the constant face-checking in his compact, is emblematic of the Victorian dandy, as evidenced in his constant looking in the mirror. He also adopts the role of social critic and commentator, speaking his lines as if they are Wilde's famous epigrams; Gardiner does not lecture as Jaques, so much as offer pronouncements intended to elicit laughter and reflection. Moreover, the inclusion of a Wilde-type is a motif to which Donnellan will return in a later production.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps most compelling, though, is the isolation and loneliness that Gardiner suggests is a part of Jaques' psychic make-up; this mirrors the isolation and loneliness of Wilde, especially after his imprisonment at Reading Gaol, and of many

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<sup>32</sup> De Jongh, December 5, 1991 and Michael Hattaway, *As You Like It* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 57.

<sup>33</sup> Cheek by Jowl revisits this motif in *The Changeling* (Declan Donnellan, 2006) through Franciscus (Philip McGinley), who attempts to steal Isabella from Alibius and disguises himself as Wilde. Michael Billington, in his review of *The Changeling*, *The Guardian*, May 16, 2006, praises the assumption of this persona. "For once the subplot scenes echo everything in the central story. Jim Hooper's asylum keeper seems positively dotty in his belief that he can keep Jodie McNee's raunchy young wife under lock and key, and Phil Cheadle and Philip McGinley as her pursuers respectively resemble a joke Hamlet and a pseudo Oscar Wilde. But the great moment comes when the inhabitants of both worlds join forces in a wild wedding dance that links love and madness, and suggests there is scarcely a cigarette-paper between them."

contemporary gay men and lesbians who feel alienated and rejected by an unsympathetic world.<sup>34</sup>

By interweaving into his production a historical figure widely associated with homosexuality through the characterization of a role sometimes played as gay, Donnellan performs the role of director as political artist and cultural activist. Donnellan accomplishes this by explicitly, though perhaps anachronistically, resituating homosexual identity into the play and, by extension, into the past. In presenting Jaques as Wilde, Donnellan's production capitalizes on Wilde's reputation as a gay cultural figure and politicizes the queering of the play.<sup>35</sup>

In politicizing *As You Like It*, Donnellan follows the Citz's model. Regardless of the actual association the audience draws between Gardiner's characterization and queer figures, this move enables spectators to identify Jaques with illicit acts and queer icons from the historical past. At the Citz' this might or might not have been intentional; and

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<sup>34</sup> In Wilde's case, the rejection was more than just an abstract sense of isolation; it destroyed both his reputation and his social position. "Society, as we have constituted it," Wilde laments in *De Profundis* (1905), "will have no place for me, has none to offer; but Nature, whose sweet rains fall on unjust and just alike, will have clefts in the rocks where I may hide, and secret valleys in whose silence I may weep undisturbed." See also "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1898), written after his release while living in Paris and first published under the name Sebastian Melmouth.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Russell, *The Gay 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Gay Men and Lesbians, Past and Present* (New York, Citadel, 1995), 10. Russell ranks Wilde #3 (behind Socrates and Sappho). "Poised at the moment in cultural history where the specific kind of organization of sexual identity into homosexual/heterosexual was first possible," Russell claims "Wilde took the revolutionary step of seizing and articulating that homosexual identity." He concludes, "After the brilliant catastrophe of Oscar Wilde, neither the public discourse of homosexuality nor the private course of our identity could ever be the same." For more on Wilde, especially in concert with contemporary queer culture, see also, Neil Bartlett, *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988). In 1997, Moises Kaufman's play *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* explores Wilde's life and love affairs by using real quotations and transcripts from his three trials for gross indecency. That same year, Brian Gilbert's film *Wilde* was widely praised for its explicit depiction of Wilde's queer desires. Supported by Jude Law as Lord Alfred Douglas, Stephen Fry's sympathetic portrayal emphasizes his humor and humanity and tries to make Wilde memorable for more than his conviction for gross indecency. Shortly thereafter, David Hare's 1998 play *Judas Kiss* turns Wilde into a masculine Christ-figure, and not just a licentious dandy.

while the effect often manifested in homophobic, negative notices, it created palpable connections between Citz's audience members and Shakespeare. For example, the Citz' took the famous Droeshot engraving of Shakespeare, dressed it in drag, re-named it "Sheila," and adopted it as a company mascot. The Citz' presented Jonathan Kent as Cleopatra as a radical drag queen, which in turn created Cleopatra into a queer icon. As well, the Citz' presented Achilles and Patroclus as lovers and glam rock stars, thus drawing a parallel between icons of the past and icons contemporary to Citz's productions.

However, as with the Citz's re-signification of gay argot, the audience's construal of Gardiner's Jaques as gay relies on the audience's ability to recognize such an identity. Different spectators will connect with different possible interpretations, as evident in the wide array of supposition surrounding Gardiner's interpretation. In the end, whether Gardiner was channeling Noël Coward, or John Gielgud, or Dirk Bogarde, or Gustav von Aschenbach, or Oscar Wilde makes little difference; it is the act of identification, rather than the identity of the object, that is important. Among those spectators who recognize homosexual persons, the further association of Jaques with figures from history fosters an opportunity to recognize lesbian/gay subjects across historical boundaries.

### Gay Bashing as Queer Aesthetic

Just as the Citz's productions of the early 1970s seemed to allude to local gay culture and events, Cheek by Jowl's production of *As You Like It* finds inspiration in recent gay happenings. But whereas the Citz' appropriated its cultural milieu, such as beefcake imagery, drag personas, and bathhouse settings, from the partial de-

criminalization of homosexuality and the Gay Liberation movement, Cheek by Jowl appropriates its icons through the specter of AIDS and in the wake of Section 28. As a result, the world of this *As You Like It* is violent, oppressive, and a dangerous place to be gay, both in scenes at Frederick's court and in the idyllic Forest of Arden.

As has been true for many of Shakespeare's fops, actors often play Le Beau as a clichéd "gay" character, prancing and mincing, and Donnellan's production offers no exception. When he first enters to converse with Celia and Rosalind, Sean Francis's Le Beau portrays "his mouth full of news" with pursed lips and raised eyebrows, heels clacking as he flounces across the stage, eager to gossip with the girls (I.2.77). Francis lisps his lines and flutters his silk handkerchief, only pausing to fan himself when he becomes over-stimulated recounting the day's events. The effect is stereotypically gay – effeminate and flighty, like a queer Stepin Fetchit in a new variety of pink minstrel show. A moment later, as Le Beau oversees preparations for Charles and Orlando's wrestling match, the courtiers tire of Francis's direction, grab him, and forcefully remove his trousers. The implication is that Le Beau was just too meticulous, too precise, and too gay to supervise his men successfully.

A short time later, Le Beau's amorous advances provoke another violent reaction. After Kissaun's Charles effortlessly tosses Handy's Orlando around the stage, four men bring Orlando, breathless and almost beaten, to his corner of the ring for a rest. Francis ineffectively dabs Handy's sweaty brow with his handkerchief in an effort to revive him; however, Le Beau's desire overcomes him and he emphatically embraces the defenseless Orlando. This proves just the impetus that Orlando needs; he groans in disgust, shrugs off Le Beau, and gains advantage through a quick succession of kicks to Charles's groin,

winning the match. This sequence stages an antagonistic relationship between the virile young hero and an effeminate queer courtier. Le Beau attempts to take advantage of Orlando's obviously weakened condition, an action that proves so distasteful that it revitalizes Orlando, propelling him forward to victory. In contrast, the queer figure of Le Beau appears almost too silly to be taken seriously. Nonetheless, fear and loathing of that figure elicits a violent response from "normal," heterosexual men.

Donnellan also incorporates a negative response to "coming out" as part of the production. Desperate to save Rosalind from banishment, Coates's Celia admits to Hobbs's Frederick that she loves Rosalind. She kneels in front of Hobbs, grabs his hand, and tells him, "Pronounce that sentence then on me, my liege, / I cannot live out of her company" (I.iii.79-80). Celia's impassioned confession transforms the daughter/father conflict between Celia and Frederick into one about queerness. Frederick's court represents normativity at its most extreme, a place where Le Beau is ridiculed and reviled; a lesbian daughter violates that heterosexist paradigm. The violent exchange between Le Beau and Frederick's courtiers is mirrored by Frederick's response to his daughter in this scene – just as the courtiers de-panted Le Beau, Frederick strips Celia of her inheritance with the pronouncement, "You are a fool" (81). Celia begs her father to pardon Rosalind, but her passionate erotic attachment to Rosalind so infuriates Frederick that he pushes his daughter to the floor and threatens execution if Rosalind remains at court.

Although the court is associated with homophobic violence, the attacks do not end once the action switches to Arden. Gay bashing is incorporated into this production with the "deer scene." After Gardiner's Jaques has spent the majority of the play seeking

sexual contact, he becomes the victim of a violent attack, which occurs after a group of hunters, shirtless and hunky, tire of chasing a deer and turn on Jaques. Their brawny, sweaty masculinity contrasts with Gardiner's deliberate delicacy. Instead of pulling out his cigarette case, as has become his custom by now, Gardiner carefully inquires, "Which is he that killed the deer?" (IV.ii.1). The hunters become menacing as they circle Jaques, singing about "the lusty horn" and pushing him violently around the stage (18). The phallic and aggressively masculine associations with the "horn" punctuates the courtiers' homophobic response to Jaques – while Jaques prefers sad songs about the winter winds, asking Lord Amiens to sing more verses, these men associate an erect, ready penis with a propensity for violence and domination. The scene ends with the pack falling on Jaques, lifting him over their heads, and carrying his struggling figure off-stage, presumably to enact some further brutality or degradation. The gay character is powerless, vulnerable, and susceptible to violence while the more traditionally masculine figures, the culture they create, and the world they inhabit promote aggression and danger. The association of hostility and sexual fantasy, of course, is not without precedent in gay cultural forms; Tom of Finland, for example, famously relied on the rough-trade masculine mystique and gay-for-pay fantasy in his erotic drawings.<sup>36</sup> At the Citizens' Theatre, the appropriation of such imagery was a common tactic, with productions regularly requiring leather jockstraps and earning the company the reputation for producing plays of "blood and

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<sup>36</sup> Tom of Finland was a fetish artist best known for his stylized homoerotic art and his influence on late 20<sup>th</sup> century gay culture. Tom of Finland's models were hyper-masculine and heavily muscled, and his explicit illustrations would feature two or more men either immediately before or during sexual activity. Well-delineated torsos, arms, legs, and butts, as well as huge penises, typify his subjects and, oftentimes partially removed, tight clothing accentuates the model's physical traits, with penises visible as distinct bulges in tight trousers, or fully aroused and centrally displayed. As well, Tom of Finland's illustrations often feature two or more men forcing another into a sexually submissive position.

glitter.”<sup>37</sup> However, Donnellan’s production takes the fantasy further as the possibility of violence becomes an actualized physical threat.

The hunters’ on-stage response to Jaques correlates with external events taking place in Britain in 1991 that had an immediate impact on the gay community. Colin Richardson, a former editor for *Gay Times*, calls the early 1990s “the worst of times” and describes anti-gay violence “spiraling out of control.”<sup>38</sup> Richardson suggests that the spike in violence is both a result of the passage of Section 28 and a response to fear of AIDS. In addition, Bulman proposes a specific connection between how Cheek by Jowl stages the deer scene and the rise in homophobic attacks. Bulman argues that in articulating a moment of violence against Jaques onstage, the production goes “beyond merely dramatizing gender ambiguities and same-sex desire to warn explicitly of the violence against homosexuals to which Thatcherism had given rise.”<sup>39</sup> Taken in tandem with the attacks on Francis’s *Le Beau* and Coates’s *Celia*, Cheek by Jowl’s production highlights moments of intimidation and suggests a community under attack.

There are numerous reasons why a queer production might stage homophobic attacks against its recognizably gay and lesbian characters. Perhaps Donnellan intends to suggest a further articulation of the relationship between silence and survival suggested

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<sup>37</sup> Laurence Senelick, “Blood and Glitter in Glasgow,” in *After Dark* 9.7 (November 1976): 54-61.

<sup>38</sup> See Colin Richardson, “The Worst of Times” *The Guardian*, August 14, 2002. Richardson recounts the deteriorating situation in the UK at the end of the 1980s. For example, in September 1989, a gay barrister, Christopher Schliach, was murdered in his west London home, stabbed more than 40 times. Three months later, in another part of west London, a gay hotelier, Henry Bright, was stabbed to death in his home and the following month gay hotel porter, William Dalziel, was found unconscious and beaten on a roadside in Acton. Dalziel died soon after from severe head injuries. Further, as arrests for gross indecency in public toilets increased, so too did violence against gay men in the toilets. In a case that garnered national attention, on April 29, 1990, Michael Booth, a well-known actor, died after a savage beating in a public toilet.

<sup>39</sup> Bulman, “Queering the Audience,” 573.

by Jaques's encounter with Oliver. Especially at Frederick's Court, keeping one's mouth shut and one's sexuality hidden seems the best way to survive. Perhaps these scenes articulate a connection between sex and violence, embodying contemporary queer fantasies of rough trade. In both gay-bashing scenes, sweaty shirtless men overpower the effeminate dandy, reacting with noticeable scorn to the dandy's effeminacy as they physically carry him off the stage. Yet in both of these instances, the mobs retreat off-stage with the gay character rather than beating him on-stage, an escalation that would have been in-line dramaturgically with the actions that led to these moments.

It is clear, however, that in staging these violent scenes, Donnellan creates a local, contemporary, and queer Shakespeare (see figure 3.8). According to Northrop Frye, in many Shakespearean comedies the main characters escape the order of the city (or court) for a forested and wild setting, a liminal place that he describes as a Green World.<sup>40</sup> In this loosely structured, fantastic environment, issues that pertain to social order, romantic relationships, and inter-generational strife – all a prominent part of the city space and comic convention – become resolved, facilitating a return to the status quo. It is only in the Green World that homosocial pairs can separate and reform as heterosexual couples. The exceptions to this rule are irreconcilable characters; they often suffer scapegoat

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<sup>40</sup> According to Northrop Frye, normally in comedy, a young man wants a young woman but some opposition, usually paternal, prevents the love-match until near the end of the play, when some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will. At the end of the play the device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize around the hero, and the moment when this crystallization occurs is the point of resolution in the action, the comic discovery, *anagnorisis* or cognition. The appearance of this new society is frequently signaled by some kind of party or festive ritual, which either appears at the end of the play or is assumed to take place immediately afterward. Weddings are most common, and sometimes so many of them occur, as in the quadruple wedding at the end of *As You Like It*, that they suggest also the wholesale pairing off that takes place in a dance, which is another common conclusion (163-64). Frye recounts his theory of archetypes in the third essay in his extremely influential *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).



rituals and expulsion from a society that will never reincorporate them. With the advent of AIDS, the passage of Section 28, and the increasing fear of and violence against homosexuals, it appears that Donnellan can no longer conceive of such an idyllic place. Donnellan is unable, or unwilling, to leave such threats outside the space of the theater, and thus he re-signifies the Green World of Arden to include the bona fides of the world from which this production actually sprang.

### Incorporating Outsiders

Donnellan continues to follow the precedent set by the Citz' in staging the marriage ceremony in his *As You Like It*; however, he goes one step further than the Citz' in taking an explicitly political stance when he includes a gay couple in the nuptial dance. Comic convention and Shakespeare's text dictates that *As You Like It* ends with a wedding; accordingly, Renaissance comedies generally begin with homosocial pairs who undergo a series of challenges so that in the end they can become part of heterosexual unions, propagate, and prosper. Frye's articulation of the Green World, which outlines the role of comedy as an archetypal genre, and C. L. Barber's articulation of Shakespeare's incorporation of festival rituals, both insist on such a resolution.<sup>41</sup> In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare draws particular attention to this generic construction by bringing four pairs together in the final act with Hymen, God of Marriage, attending to the nuptials. Although it takes an actual *deus ex machina* to bring Orlando and Rosalind,

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<sup>41</sup> C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), especially Chapter 9: "The Alliance of Seriousness and Levity in *As You Like It*," 222-240.

Oliver and Celia, Silvius and Phoebe, and Touchstone and Audrey together, the play concludes with their marriage dance.

Donnellan's all-male production, however, complicates this situation by exploiting the meanings of male-male couplings. In the lead up to the wedding, for example, Lester's Ganymede/Rosalind promises Handy's Orlando, "I shall *satisfy you* if ever I *satisfy man*," a declaration loaded with erotic tension (V.ii.109, emphasis Lester's). Lester no longer spits after saying "man," but instead purposefully seeks to fulfill the promise of sexual satisfaction that Handy's Orlando represents. This promise becomes not so much an item on a to-do list (as it is often played with variations on the line repeated in turn to Silvius, Phoebe, and Orlando), but rather a pledge of sexual gratification (see figure 3.4). Because of Lester's ambiguity and the manifold levels of disguise operating in this production, the line comes across as potentially unsettling, and the audience laughs – or at least it did in the performance I saw.

This laughter indicates, however, not a fixed response but a multiplicity of possibilities. The audience might be responding to the situation dictated by Shakespeare's text, for instance. Perhaps because Rosalind here slips out of her Ganymede persona and promises to give sexual relief to the unknowing and frustrated Orlando, the audience laughs in approval of the pending consummation. Such a reaction supports the standard comedic marital ending. Perhaps the audience laughs at the thought of Ganymede, a young male, sexually pleasing Orlando, another male. This suggests that the tension between Lester and Handy has been palpable and that Orlando's attraction to Ganymede registers with the audience. Such a response is ironic, and recognizes the implicit homoeroticism in Shakespeare's text as well as the desirability of young males in

early modern culture.<sup>42</sup> Finally, perhaps the audience laughs at the thought of Lester, a physically mature man, providing sexual relief for Handy, another full-grown man. This instance is arguably the most transgressive of comic conventions, as it seems to imply an affirmative, post-modern gay relationship between Lester and Handy, two sexually mature male actors and characters.

These complications reach a pinnacle in the production when Handy's Orlando initially refuses to accept Lester's Rosalind as his wife. Rosalind, no longer disguised as Ganymede, appears in a white wedding gown, offers Orlando her hand and declares, "To you I give myself, for I am yours" (V.iv.121). Handy pulls back and refuses to take Lester's hand, moving quickly downstage and away from Lester. Lester's Rosalind, for her part, sobs, throws down her bouquet and runs to David Hobbs's Banished Duke (double-cast as Frederick and his brother). Hobbs hugs Lester, looks into his face, and proclaims, "If there be truth in sight, you are my daughter" (122). Following Hobbs's lead, Handy slowly approaches Lester and tentatively asks, "If there be truth in sight, you are my Rosalind?" (123). Then, Handy kisses Lester, and the audience responds with laughter and applause.

Every critic who wrote about this production seems to have a different idea of what the moment between rejection and acceptance signified. As with the earlier laughter at the promise of sexual fulfillment, their responses seem to fall into three factions: those who believe that Handy's Orlando sees Rosalind, those who believe that he sees Ganymede, and those who believe that he sees Lester. For Carol Chillington

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<sup>42</sup>For a more elaborate discussion of the tradition of boy-actors, see "Queering Cross-Gender Casting," in this dissertation's "Chapter One: How to Perform Shakespeare Queer," 8-15.

Rutter, this scene serves as a companion to Orlando's earlier failure to recognize Ganymede as Rosalind disguised as a boy. According to Rutter, Handy sees a figure walk out in a dress, but when Lester lifts the veil, the figure turns out to be male. It is only after the Duke embraces *his* daughter that Orlando recognizes Rosalind. Rutter notes Handy's "eyes registering a complete wipe of his gender memory as his arms reach out to the person he now saw as Rosalind."<sup>43</sup> Of course, Rutter unintentionally erases the gay content from the play with her "complete wipe," yet she goes on to astutely point out, "at the end of *this* production, everybody saw something different." Peter Holland also describes Orlando as "shocked at the trick and shamed at his failure to recognize her."<sup>44</sup> Peter J. Smith likewise sees an Orlando who "staggered back and shoved her from him" only accepting her after Rosalind "submit[s] herself to male authority figures."<sup>45</sup>

Those who believe Orlando sees Ganymede, on the other hand, tend to view the proceedings as either the rejection or acceptance of homosexuality. Michael Hattaway claims, "The *coup de théâtre* came when Orlando could not kiss Rosalind [because Orlando] was straight. He went and leaned in agony against the proscenium arch. He came back slowly, and then, still reluctantly, was drawn into a passionate embrace."<sup>46</sup> Benedict Nightingale sees an Orlando who first "shied off in conventional dismay" and then returned with an acceptance of "the scope and contradictions of his sexuality."<sup>47</sup> Yet, even within this "wide scope," reading Orlando's response in terms of "gay" or

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<sup>43</sup> Carol Chillington Rutter, "Maverick Shakespeare," in *A Companion to Shakespeare and Performance*, edited by Barbara Hodgdon and W.B. Worthen, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 351.

<sup>44</sup> Holland, *English Shakespeares*, 94.

<sup>45</sup> Peter J. Smith, "As You Like It" *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 42 (1992): 74.

<sup>46</sup> Michael Hattaway, *As You Like It* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 59.

<sup>47</sup> Benedict Nightingale, *The Times* December 6, 1991.

“straight” risks ignoring the ambiguous performance of gender the production has constructed, where the truth lies not in binary oppositions but in a spectrum of possibilities.

Thus, it is within a third option that this production finds its greatest ambiguity, and, I would argue, its queerest potential: those who see an actor playing a sexual role. As Bulman observes, this moment “satisfied the heteronormative fiction of the play yet admitted homosexual self-realization – the queering of Orlando, and in so far as spectators had been taught by the production to see sexuality as fluid and gender as contingent, the queering of the audience as well.”<sup>48</sup> To push Bulman’s idea further, this moment, which Lester’s portrayal enables, opens the play text, the actual words on the page, to possibilities that might not otherwise exist. Just as Coates and Lester’s actions amplify Celia and Rosalind’s lesbian attachment through the bodies of men, Handy’s interactions as Orlando with Lester as Rosalind/Ganymede celebrates the possibility of men getting married – the actors’ bodies mediate the characters’ sexuality. Thus, Donnellan suggests that sexuality is as fluid as gender, and that comedy need not always end with heterosexual couplings.

Donnellan’s production further realizes this tension and challenges the construction of Frye’s Green World when later in the same scene, society rewards rather than rejects the “irreconcilable” Jaques with a same-sex wedding. At the start of that scene, Hymen (Rashan Stone) reinforces Jaques’s status as outsider by systematically blessing the heterosexual couples; yet when he gets to Gardiner, Stone withholds his

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<sup>48</sup> Bulman, “Queering the Audience,” 573.

sanction. While other characters' liminal experiences in the forest have led to reunification with society, Jaques remains an outsider with no place in the normative world of heterosexual marriage that Hymen oversees. Gardiner spits out his parting lines as a curse, not in the form of a blessing, as has become standard in productions of *As You Like It*. In speaking to the Banished Duke, Orlando, Oliver, Silvius, and Touchstone, Gardiner makes the scene into a bitter, resentful blight, rather than a series of nostalgic goodbyes:

You to your former honor I *bequeath*;  
Your patience and your virtue *well deserves* it.  
You to a love that your *true faith* doth merit;  
You to your *land*, and *love*, and *great* allies;  
You to a long and well-deservèd bed;  
And you to *wrangling*, for thy loving voyage  
Is *but* for two months *victualled* (V.iv.175-181).

The emphases are Gardiner's, and pronounced alternately mocking and judgmentally. In most productions, Jaques leaves the stage after explaining that he is "for other than dancing measures" (182).<sup>49</sup> This, in turn, obliges Duke Senior to start the celebratory wedding dance with the promise, "We'll begin these rites, / As we do trust they'll end, in true delights" (197-8). However, while Shakespeare's text implies that Jaques leaves the stage in self-imposed exile at the Duke's "abandon'd cave," in Donnellan's production Jaques pauses, and then passionately embraces Hymen (196). Before the heterosexual couples get a chance to achieve their "true delights" (as represented in the wedding dance), the production alters the standard comic conclusion: Jaques and Hymen, now coupled, also join in the dance.

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<sup>49</sup> *The Norton Shakespeare* reinforces this supposition with a stage direction indicating that Jaques does indeed exit at this point.

Once again, depending on who is watching it, this moment can have different meanings. Some find in this ending the happy acceptance of Jaques/queer historical figures/gay men; by joining in the dance, Jaques reconciles with heteronormative society. In this way, gay “delights” are just as “true” as their straight foils. Thus, the ending becomes a corrective to generic standards. However, for others, this moment might suggest the erasure of difference and the end of the queer, as Jaques is forced into a society that previously rejected him, and which he seemed uninterested in joining. His inclusion particularly challenges the queerness of the performance for those critics who reject any attempt at normativity and believe that social conformity means the end of queer culture. Michael Warner, for example, argues in *The Trouble with Normal* that gay marriage merely “sanctifies some couples at the expense of others. It is selective legitimacy.”<sup>50</sup> As such, it privileges the couples who enter it while leaving “unmarried queers looking more deviant.”<sup>51</sup> By this reasoning, Jaques becomes the victim of straight appropriation and a part of the social order: normalized, he becomes an insider.

Regardless of one’s perspective on the politics of marriage equality, by including Jaques and Hymen in the marriage ritual, Donnellan re-signifies comic conventions as queer. Rather than introducing gay argot into the wider vernacular, Donnellan inserts gay characters into a widely recognized, normatively straight practice. This solution to the problem of what to do with queer characters in conventional comic endings, however, is not extended to all: Gardiner’s Jaques might have found a happy conclusion, but the same

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<sup>50</sup> Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 82.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

is not true for Coates' Celia, whose reluctance to marry Oliver cannot overcome the dictates of the text (see figure 3.9).

## Coda

By 1991, when Cheek by Jowl first staged *As You Like It*, AIDS and the culture wars of the 1980s have supplanted the Citz's explicitly sexualized approach to performing Shakespeare. The Gay Liberation movement of the 1970s is by now a memory, replaced by direct-action political groups such as ACT UP, OutRage!, Queer Nation, and The Lesbian Avengers, who envision themselves as literally fighting for their lives. These groups respond, among other things, to the Thatcher and Reagan administrations' silence as AIDS decimated the gay community, as well as the passage of Section 28, adopted in 1988, which expressly prohibited local authorities in the United Kingdom from "promoting homosexuality" or "the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."<sup>52</sup> In this tumultuous time, activists and artists on both sides of the Atlantic united with a profound sense of anger and the desire for political action.

This production certainly bears a semblance with the Citz's precedent, especially in its appropriation of gay icons and presentation of sexual identities as part of Shakespearean performance. Cross-gender casting is integral to both companies' approach to Shakespeare. As well, when Donnellan transposes Jaques line, "All the world's a stage," to the opening of the performance, he follows the tenets of the Citizens'

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<sup>52</sup> "Local Government Act 1988 (c. 9), section 28." Accessed July 1, 2008. URL: [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga\\_19880009\\_en\\_5.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880009_en_5.htm)



Theatre, which regularly altered Shakespeare's texts as part of its performance strategy. Both companies cross cultural and historical boundaries in their representations of Shakespeare. For the Citz', this includes references to gay saunas, glam rockers, and beefcake as part of Troilus and Cressida; for Donnellan this includes cottaging, the down-low, coming out, and inference of illicit sexuality. Both companies also highlight sexual and gender identity as fluid categories.

However, contextualized by the turmoil of its time, Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* is necessarily different in its theatrical approach than its dramaturgical ancestors. Donnellan attempts something new: he not only presents cross-gender casting as a hybrid of the campy humor of Panto and the radical ostentation of the Citz's style, but he uses it to exploit the concept of gender and sexuality as performative. Instead of alluding to acts of erotic freedom and sexual liberation (the practice at the Citz'), as enacted on stage, Cheek by Jowl's all-male production offers gay men and lesbians the hope of social acceptance even as it creatively negotiates the obstacles of misunderstanding and homophobia. Donnellan's use of cross-gender casting enhances an understanding of gender's constructedness while centralizing non-heteronormative experience.

The idea of gender slipping easily on and off comes full circle when Lester takes off his women's garb, steps out of his dual role as Rosalind and Ganymede, and addresses the audience as himself in the play's epilogue. Just as the performance begins with actors taking on their genders at Jaques's insistence, it ends with the removal of gender signifiers. Sexy and flirtatious, Lester unties the scarf he wears as Rosalind, explaining, "It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue" (1-2). Then, as if responding to Gardiner's orchestration in the beginning of the performance, Lester

acknowledges, “but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue” (2-3). Accordingly, because a “lord” (here, male) did speak the prologue, and in doing so called the actors to their characters’ gender, Lester now reminds the audience of the thoughtful ways in which the production deliberately performs gender. An actor can enact gender simply by stripping off a scarf, or stepping to the left in a queer production.

Additionally, the display of erotic fluidity becomes a focus for Lester’s epilogue. Lester charges the women “for the love you bear to men,” and the men “for the love you bear to women (as I perceive by your simp’ring, none of you hates them)” to acknowledge that they enjoyed the performance (13, 14-16). While this might otherwise reinforce normative responses, Lester places himself as the object of both associations and as a performer comfortable in both genders. Given the events of the previous two hours, when Lester has performed as both Rosalind and Ganymede, gender performativity and sexual multiplicity amplify difference. Lester goes on to coyly tell the audience, “If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleas’d me, complexions that lik’d me, and breaths that I defied not” (18-20). Lester delivers this line as a promise, emphasizing the “would” more than the “if,” making the conditional into an imperative.<sup>53</sup> Because he has demonstrated his understanding of the constructed condition of womanhood throughout the play (beginning when he stepped left during the first scene), the implication, then, becomes more about beards he finds pleasing, complexions that like him, and sweet-smelling breath. Because of its ambiguity, the

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<sup>53</sup> At least this is how I heard the line delivered. Alicia Solomon, in contrast, in the performance she saw at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, noted the delivery of “if” rather than “would,” emphasizing the conditional. See Alisa Solomon, “Much Virtue in If: Shakespeare’s Cross-Dressed Boy-Actresses and the Non-Illusory Stage,” in *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997): 21-45.

epilogue suggests that the same conditions that govern the performance continue beyond the utterance of the final line. The result is an approach to cross-gendered Shakespeare that is implicitly queer, suggesting that gender, object choice, and subjectivity are porous, mutable, and multivalent.

Just as the Citizens' Theatre influenced *Cheek by Jowl*, and just as both companies' productions represent aspects of queer theater, the next chapter examines the ways in which cross-gender casting experienced a post-millennial renaissance and continues to mark successive productions of Shakespeare as queer. These later productions all share the same textual base, *Twelfth Night*, and all share cross-gender casting as a common trait – but the ways in which the Globe, *Cheek by Jowl*, and Propeller approach that text varies widely. Just because a company practices cross-gender casting, or even borrows aesthetics used by the Citz' in the early 1970s or in *As You Like It* in the early 1990s, does not necessarily make a production queer. Moreover, even when a production appropriates and re-signifies queer referents, the points of queer reference can differ greatly. Thus, the comparisons that are the focus of the next chapter explore what makes a production queer and what makes a production not queer.

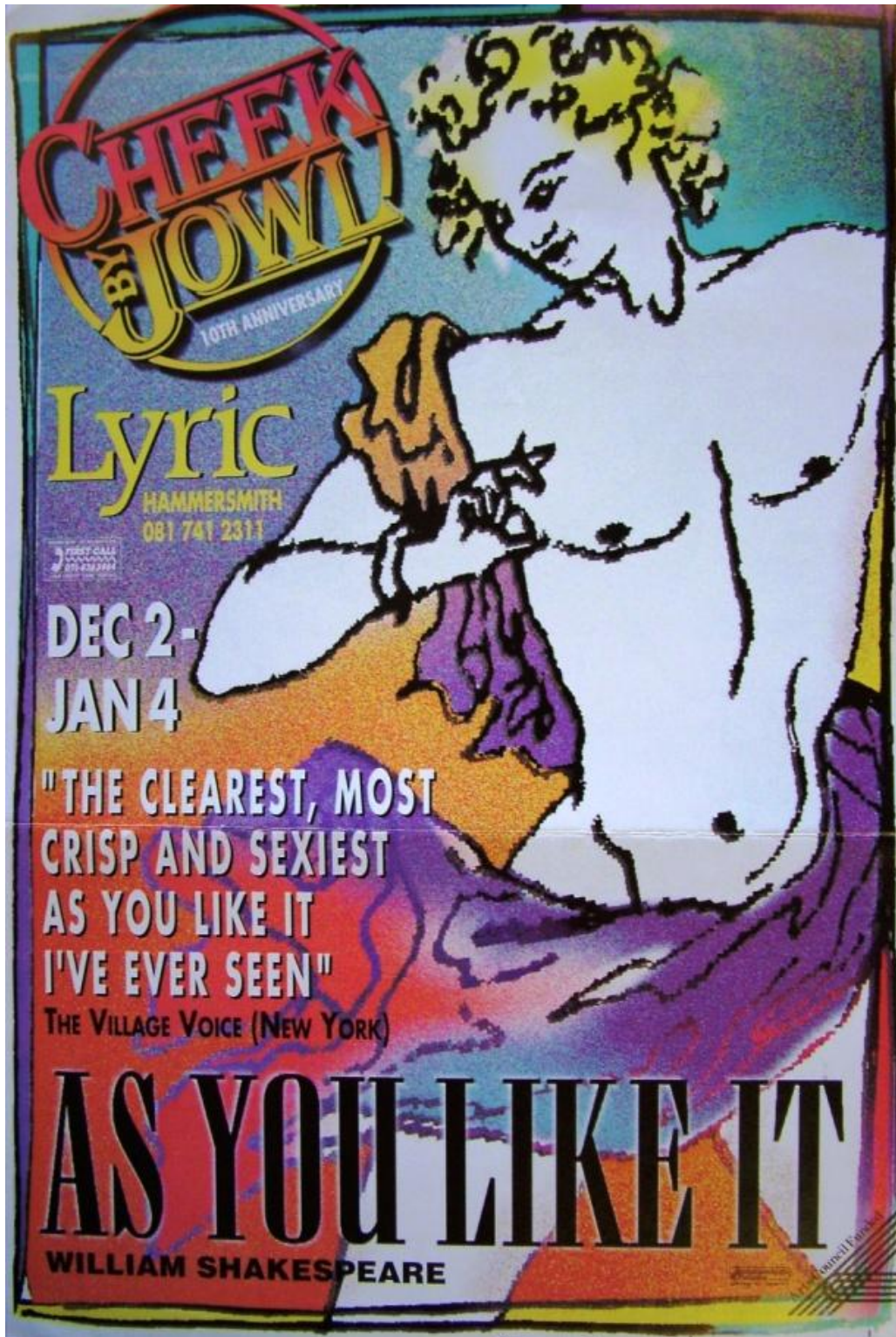


Figure 3.1 The promotional poster for Cheek by Jowl's 1991 all-male *As You Like It*.



**Figure 3.2** Rosalind and Celia in repose. Rosalind (Adrian Lester, in blue) shares a quiet moment with Celia (Simon Coates, in red and on Lester's lap) in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).





Figure 3.3 Rosalind and Celia. As she bites Rosalind's calf, Celia (Coates) urges Rosalind (Lester), "My sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry," in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).



Figure 3.4 Two scenes. Left: Orlando (Scott Handy) throws Charles (Paul Kissan) in the wrestling scene in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994). Right: Rosalind (Lester) disguised as Ganymede plays Rosalind for Orlando (Handy) in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).



**Figure 3.5** Three's a crowd. Rosalind (Lester) disguised as Ganymede plays Rosalind for Orlando (Handy) while Celia (Coates) watches in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).



**Figure 3.6** Lovers' spat. Celia (Coates) argues with Rosalind (Lester) disguised as Ganymede in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).



**Figure 3.7** Melancholic queer. Jaques (Michael Gardiner) in a pensive moment in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).



**Figure 3.8** The Forest of Arden. In Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).





**Figure 3.9** The reluctant bride. Celia (Coates) dances with Rosalind (Lester) at their wedding in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).

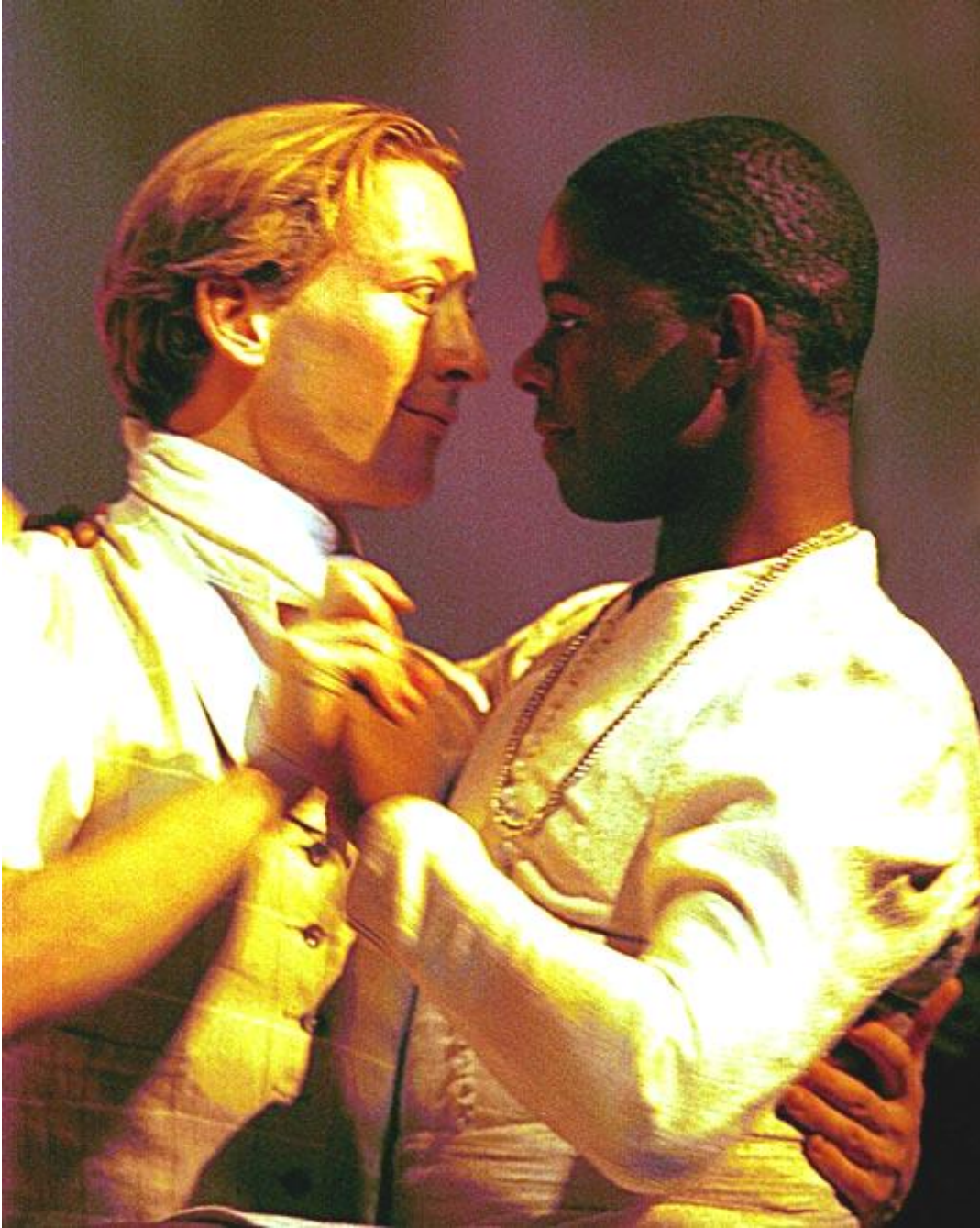


Figure 3.10 True delights. Orlando (Handy) dances with Rosalind (Lester) at their wedding in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* (1994).

## Chapter Four:

### Queering (or Not) All-Male Productions of *Twelfth Night*

In 2003, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre's all-male production of *Twelfth Night* (Tim Carroll, 2002) left London and toured internationally.<sup>1</sup> In conjunction with the Globe's performances in Ann Arbor that November, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan organized a series of events including a panel that featured scholars, both visiting and from the University of Michigan, and Globe actors entitled "Queer Eye for the Straight Play."<sup>2</sup> The panel proposed using an all-male cast as an entrée to discuss "some interesting issues around gender and sexuality."<sup>3</sup> Starting the conversation, Holly Dugan (one of the scholars) asked the actors to connect "early modern technologies of gender" (i.e., authentic dress, original staging techniques) with ideas about performing as a "queer body." In her question, Dugan specifically cited the Globe's practice of staging a "dressing scene" prior to the play proper, in which the actors applied make-up and put on costumes in full view of the audience – a choice that

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<sup>1</sup> Stops included Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Ann Arbor, and Chicago.

<sup>2</sup> "Queer Eye for the Straight Play" (panel sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, November 19, 2003). Valerie Traub (Michigan, English and Women's Studies) moderated the panel. The scholars were Holly Dugan (then Ph.D. candidate in English, now at George Washington University, English), Barbara Hodgdon (Michigan, English), Jeffrey Masten (Northwestern, English and Gender Studies), and John Neville-Andrews (Michigan, Theatre and Drama). The actors were Liam Brennan (Orsino), Patrick Brennan (Antonio), Michael Brown (Viola/Cesario), James Garnon (Fabian), Richard Glaves (Curio), Peter Hamilton Dyer (Feste), Rhys Meredith (Sebastian), Mark Rylance (Olivia), Peter Shorey (Maria), Bill Stewart (Sir Toby Belch), Timothy Walker (Malvolio), and Albie Woodington (Sir Andrew Aguecheek).

<sup>3</sup> "'Queer eye for the straight play': Speakers will discuss homoeroticism in Shakespeare," *The Institute for Research on Women and Gender Newsletter* (Fall 2003), 5.

to her suggested a self-conscious queering of gender as a construction. However, Mark Rylance, who played Olivia and served as the Globe's artistic director, provided a short, unequivocal answer to Dugan's open-ended question: "No."

This uncomfortable moment reflects two very different philosophies regarding all-male Shakespeare on the post-millennial stage. To Dugan, the performativity and artifice of the moment referenced an aspect of gender that seemed linked, via its awareness of artifice, with queer theory's formulation of gender as performative. As Annamarie Jagose posits,

Whether as transvestite performance or academic deconstruction, queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms ['chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire'] which stabilize heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any 'natural' sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as 'man' and 'woman'.<sup>4</sup>

For Dugan, Rylance and company's performances seemed to destabilize gender, and by extension, to destabilize heterosexuality; conversely, for Rylance there was "nothing at all queer" about the men playing men's roles, and he was just an actor playing a role (see figure 4.1). He was especially emphatic about that fact – he said he performed female characters in exactly the same way he performed male characters, and suggested that his preparation was completely, unequivocally normal. This division highlights, however, one of the "problems" inherent in the recent resurgence of cross-gender cast productions of Shakespeare; that is, what might seem queer to one person might seem utterly straight to someone else. Having seen Rylance's performance, I tend to agree with his own

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<sup>4</sup> Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 3. Jagose also provides a succinct, smart account of queer theory's academic origins and critical objectives.

assessment that there was very little queer about his approach to the role of Olivia – however, for a different reason than he provides. As he sat stage-center and dressed, Rylance darted his eyes through the crowd, winking whenever he caught woman’s eye, and coyly smiling as if to say, “Oops, you caught me looking!” At the same time, in the performance I saw, he seemed deliberately to avoid making similar advances at the men in the audience, at least when I saw it, instead staying focused solely on the women in the crowd. So, while Dugan perhaps aligned his performance with queer performativity, I registered his actions in the dressing scene as a display of heterosexuality, employed in order to excuse his cross-dressing as simply a theatrical motif. Paradoxically, both Dugan and Rylance were correct.

In *Twelfth Night*, the first time Viola appears, she is lost. Recently shipwrecked and freshly plucked from the sea, she plaintively asks the audience, “What country, friends, is this?”<sup>5</sup> Her subsequent decision to disguise herself as Cesario as she attempts to survive in Illyria results in several erotic situations. In turn, these circumstances compound the sexual confusions that feed the dramatic action of the play. In early modern England, Viola’s cross-dressing was complicated even further because a young male would have played her role. And so, given the manifold erotic possibilities the play’s plot suggests is normative, the play’s subtitle, *What You Will*, seems especially apt.

Frequently, however, the real transgression of mixing cross-dressing and cross-sex desire, a frequent trope in transvestite comedy, occurs in our modern

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<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, I.ii.i. I shall indicate subsequent citations parenthetically. All textual references are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, one-volume edition, ed. Stephen Greenblatt *et al.*, (New York: Norton, 1997).

conceptualization of such a possibility.<sup>6</sup> This tension between historical norms and modern conceptions of normalcy helps open *Twelfth Night* to different interpretations; however, the play's seemingly endless expression of erotic plurality only goes so far. Within this variety of opportunities, Shakespeare reifies heterosexual endings by prescribing three matrimonial couplings – Sebastian and Olivia, Orsino and Viola, and Toby and Maria. Thus, although playgoers experience a variety of erotic situations through the course of the play, in the end, the three unmarried female characters are securely attached to male mates, presumably negating the need for future transgression (transvestite or otherwise.)<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding its drive towards heterosexual resolution, *Twelfth Night* has been nonetheless a frequent subject of queer critique. Those critics who study the play through the apparatus of queer theory often focus on the gender and sexual confusion that Viola's cross-dressing compounds as well as Antonio's passionate attachment to Sebastian.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In transvestite comedies, a female character disguises herself as a male and woos her intended mate. *As You Like It* (1599-1600), *Twelfth Night* (1601-02), and *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-98) are Shakespeare's transvestite comedies, but others include John Lyly's *Gallathea* (1585-91), Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* (1609), and Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton's *The Roaring Girl* (1607-10).

<sup>7</sup> For a long time, critics argued comedy's generic structure exclusively supported such heteronormative conclusions; however, more and more scholars have challenged those suppositions. One of the first critics to challenge the importance of the heteronormative resolution at the end of comedies, Valerie Traub points out that "gender hierarchies seem to be both temporarily transgressed and formally reinstated." See Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), 120. Traub goes on to argue that the normative process of reinstatement entails the expulsion of disruptive male and female homoeroticism and the reinstatement of women within the patriarchal order. In light of readings of comic endings by Steven Orgel, Julie Crawford, and Will Fisher, Traub has subsequently clarified this position, rightly acknowledging that the promise of marriage is not the same as a wedding ceremony. For an account of the queer re-appropriation of comic endings, see Julie Crawford, "The Homoerotics of Shakespeare's Elizabethan Comedies," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works, Volume Four: The Comedies*, ed. Richard Dutton and Jean Howard (New York: Blackwell, 2005), 137-158.

<sup>8</sup> A genealogy of related feminist and queer critique of *Twelfth Night* is covered at greater length in this dissertation's introduction. However, Laurie Osborne, for example, studied the ways in which Antonio's position at the end of *Twelfth Night* was "corrected" in late eighteenth-century performance editions of the play, coinciding with a time when there are a marked increase in persecutions of

Scholars argue extensively about the ability of the boy transvestite actors to represent deep-seated anxieties about the instability of social identity as represented through gender and sexuality.<sup>9</sup> As well, they comment on the boy-actor's ability to create that instability, partly by challenging the notion of a fixed, essential gender identity and partly by inviting an audience to participate in the process of collapsing such binaries. These liminal moments can transcend the theoretical and become practical when performed by cross-gender casts, which in performance can highlight the expression of a stage production's attitude towards sexual and gender identity. After all, as Harry Berger argues, "The body is a representation as well as a presence: something more than meets the eye always meets the eye. Bodies are not only media of communication but media of signification."<sup>10</sup> Given the play's history as a source of queer scholarship, its playful approach to gender and sexuality, and the recent resurgence in regular cross-gender casting, one might assume an all-male *Twelfth Nights* would be hard to not construe as

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homosexuals and love between men would have been a very dangerous and recognizable subject for representation. See Laurie Osborne, "Antonio's Pardon," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45.1 (1994). Lisa Jardine points out that all the central relationships in *Twelfth Night* are those of eroticized service, suggesting the homoeroticism of master/servant relationships. See Lisa Jardine, "Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency, and Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992.)

<sup>9</sup> I discuss the relationship between cross-dressed boy actors, gay content, and disruption of heteronormativity at greater length in this dissertation's introduction. On "polymorphous perversity": Freud theorizes that human beings are born with unfocused sexual libidinal drives, deriving sexual pleasure from any part of the body. The objects and modes of sexual satisfaction are diverse and directed at every object that might provide pleasure. According to Freud, polymorphous perverse sexuality continues from infancy through about age five, progressing through three distinct developmental stages: the oral, anal, and phallic. Only in subsequent developmental stages do children learn to confine sexual drives to socially accepted norms, culminating in adult heterosexual behavior focused on the genitals and reproduction. Freud argued that during these early stages of undifferentiated impulse for sexual pleasure, incestuous and bisexual urges are normal. Lacking knowledge that certain drives are forbidden, the polymorphously perverse child seeks sexual gratification wherever it occurs. For Freud, "perversion" is a non-judgmental term, which designates behavior outside socially acceptable norms. For literary critics, the term can describe non-normative erotic impulses as well as sexual exploration; we use it ironically

<sup>10</sup> Harry Berger, *Situated Utterances: Texts, Bodies, and Cultural Representations* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 255.

queer; however, this is far from the case. I would like, therefore, to pose a question: what makes some all-male Shakespearean performances queer and others not?

In recent years, a renaissance of all-male Shakespeare has taken place, challenging our modern sensibilities especially in regards to staging erotic possibility, sexual identity, and gender fluidity. As this dissertation details, this movement began in the 1970s at Citizens' Theatre in Glasgow, which reintroduced cross-gender casting as one of many radical theatrical aesthetics operating within the context of gay male culture. Decades later, Cheek by Jowl presented an all-male *As You Like It* (Declan Donnellan, 1991) that shared in the Citz's interest in gay male culture, but approached cross-gender performance in an entirely different way – as performative, certainly, but lacking the glamour and flamboyance of the Citz'. While the influence of the Citz' on Cheek by Jowl is never explicitly acknowledged in the historical record, nonetheless, both companies helped develop a cross-gendered Shakespearean aesthetic that is sexy, provocative, and decidedly queer.

Since the turn of the millennium, three British professional theatrical companies have presented William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* in ways that might otherwise seem unique, but for one glaring similarity: all-male casts. These cross-gendered productions, by the Globe, Cheek by Jowl for the Chekhov International Theatre Festival (Declan Donnellan, 2003), and Propeller (Edward Hall, 2006), toured internationally, in some cases within months of each other and often playing in the same venues; however, their approaches, and results, varied greatly. Some of these productions were replete with queer moments, while others appeared – for lack of a better term – more or less straight.



This chapter examines the recent vogue for all-male *Twelfth Night*, and analyzes the ways in which different companies approach this strategy of performance. Through close analysis, this study helps to delineate further the emerging aesthetics of queer performed Shakespeare. It makes more transparent and intelligible the connection between contemporary cross-gender casting and the possibility for performing queer Shakespeare. Looking at similar moments across these all-male productions, as well as a related moment in an all-male *Taming of the Shrew*, helps clarify the cultural contexts within which each production operates. I argue that it takes more than cross-gender casting to make queer theater.

Whereas previous chapters concentrated on several productions by a single company, and a single production by one company, here the conversation includes several different productions of one Shakespearean play. The referents that registered as queer in previous chapters often continue to convey as queer, but others do not; further, in some cases, these productions will seem queer in some ways and in other ways not. As well, this chapter challenges the assertion that cross-gender casting must necessarily reference early modern models, instead suggesting that it can reference productions that are more recent, thereby recuperating the practice as an aesthetic of queer Shakespeare. Thus, this chapter further develops an understanding of strategies to queer Shakespeare in performance, which will prove useful in the examining and staging future cross-gendered productions of early modern plays.

My analysis is neither comprehensive nor all-inclusive; instead, as in previous chapters, I focus on certain moments that seem especially queer or, conversely, not queer. Accordingly, this study analyzes several moments in these productions that are staged, at

least by some of them, as homoerotic. I examine dressing scenes (staging the action of putting men into dresses in a pre-show) to delineate each production's approach to cross-gender casting – a theatrical strategy turned queer aesthetic when used previously by the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl. As well, I address the treatment of male homoerotic relationships, typically epitomized by Antonio's attachment to Sebastian, and how each production stages the possibility of gay male erotic contact. I consider how each production treats Viola/Cesario's interactions with Orsino and/or Olivia. These exchanges become important sites where cross-dressing and homoerotic possibility come together to potentially create queer theatrical moments, specifically by offering the body of the actor as a site for homoerotic pleasure. By identifying and analyzing how each company stages its all-male *Twelfth Night*, I highlight queer aesthetics that have been passed down from the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*.

### Dressing Queer

There are numerous reasons why a modern theater company might return to the early modern practice of male actors playing female roles in a present-day production.<sup>11</sup> Some, for instance the American Shakespeare Center's Blackfriars Playhouse, use men in women's roles to represent a more historically "authentic" sense of early modern drama in performance. Others use cross-gender casting in non-traditional ways, such as the

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<sup>11</sup> Most anyone who has ever studied a Shakespeare play knows that in the English Renaissance on the London stage, women's roles were played by men. While the practice formally ended just after the Restoration in 1662, in certain areas (all-male prep schools and universities, the military, prisons) it continued regularly, in some cases even to today. For more, see Michael Dobson, "Introduction," in *Performing Shakespeare's Tragedies Today: The Actor's Perspective*, ed. Michael Dobson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-16.

Queen's Company's all-female productions, which provide iconic male roles for female actors and celebrate "a diversity of voices."<sup>12</sup> Still others, including Neil Bartlett's recent work for the Royal Shakespeare Company, use cross-gender casting selectively to destabilize assumptions regarding gender and sexual identity, often deliberately foregrounding a play's homoerotic aspects by casting specific parts across gender lines, thereby creating self-identified "queer theatre."

With Shakespeare, all these approaches are possible, as there are no rules to govern the way a company can stage cross-dressing. Shakespeare as a style of acting is an unsettled category and there is not a single, universally accepted approach to acting Shakespeare. For example, actors who study the Stanislavski method will approach Shakespeare with an emphasis on the actor playing the part, specifically drawing on sense memory, clarifying character's objectives, and asking "If I were in this situation, how might I react?" The Yale School of Drama, on the other hand, teaches a textual system in which a script is analyzed and parts of speech are assigned value, with some words stressed more in performance (active verbs, nouns, adjectives) and others de-emphasized (passive verbs and "to be", pronouns, conjunctions). In certain instances, the matter becomes even more open when males take female roles, as the degree to which an actor performs gender can multiply two or even threefold, with characters like *Twelfth Night's*

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<sup>12</sup> Rebecca Patterson, artistic director of Queen's Company, from the company's homepage, <http://www.queenscompany.org/> (accessed July 1, 2009.) In her casting practices, Patterson expands the precedent set in the Nineteenth century when women commonly played male parts on the professional stage to showcase their expertise. For example, in 1899 Sarah Bernhardt played Hamlet, Cleopatra, and Lady Macbeth in repertory on the Paris stage. Also, the presupposition that women were completely excluded from the English early modern stage is being challenged in books such as Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin, ed., *Women Players in England, 1500-1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage* (Hampshire, UK & Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005.)

Viola (who disguises herself as the eunuch Cesario) and *As You Like It*'s Rosalind (who disguises herself as Ganymede and while disguised subsequently pretends to be Rosalind.)

When the Globe Theatre staged its dressing scene, which proved so divisive for Dugan and Rylance, the actions of actors as they donned their costumes evoked living-history, creating a sense of watching a historical reenactment. Indeed, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre stakes its claim for historical authenticity by offering its audience a chance to view actors dressing as part of the price of admission. From the moment the house-doors open, the audience is free to watch as Globe actors prepare for performance, joke with one another and the audience, apply elaborate make up, struggle into their costumes, sing, and gossip. At the Globe Theatre in London, these events take place in the Tiring House (see figures 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Though separate from the stage, it is in full view of the audience. When *Twelfth Night* toured to Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Pittsburgh, Ann Arbor, and Chicago, it followed the example in the tradition set at the Middle Temple (where the production opened), which is to set the dressing scene center-stage (see figure 4.1).

According to the play's program, "This production is the most authentic that the Globe Theatre Company has staged to date, with specifically arranged period music, an all-male cast, and authentic Elizabethan dress."<sup>13</sup> This claim for authenticity equates men playing women's parts with the playing of period music or historically accurate costume construction, and slipping "an all-male cast" between authentic music and clothes

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<sup>13</sup> Zoe Gray, *Twelfth Night* program 2002.

assuages any anxiety the audience might have regarding cross-dressing. Rylance, speaking as both artistic director and Olivia, even insists that the Globe is recreating “original practices” in order to reveal the “layers of meaning that modern practice obscures.”<sup>14</sup> Especially when clarified by his exchange with Dugan, Rylance’s comment implies that the Globe’s objective in cross-gender casting contrasts sharply with precedent set by the Citz’ and Cheek by Jowl’s *As You Like It*, both of which used modern references to signify a connection with aspects of present-day culture.

However, notwithstanding Rylance’s insistence that cross-dressing is a normative historical practice, the Globe’s dressing scene is non-normative, I would submit, in a particular way. By highlighting the actions of the actors who will play female characters, the production necessarily calls attention to male bodies in women’s clothes.<sup>15</sup> The audience enters to see the entire company already on-stage, with the benches and tables that will eventually become set pieces functioning as make-up stations with large mirrors dividing the tables lengthwise. In this way, the audience is privy to the conversions of every actor into his character, regardless of gender. Yet as the actors who will play women dress, they reveal something strange, extraordinary, and non-normative – men

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Rawson, *Pittsburg Post Gazette*, November 2, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Rylance enacts an elaborate prologue of putting on gender that simultaneously announces his heterosexuality and excuses the disruptive potentiality of his performance. In addition, in part because of his reputation as an actor, in part because of his renown when playing women’s roles, and in part because of his position as the Globe’s artistic director, audience interest and attention focuses more on Rylance than on any other actor. This is not to say that the other actors who play women did not also perform their gender. Peter Shorey, for example, while dressing pays little attention to the spectators; however once clad as Maria, she begins to glide around the stage, interact with the audience, tilting her head to the side, blowing kisses to the men, and rolling her eyes at the women. In short, Shorey’s behavior mirrors that of Maria – saucy, flirty, and funny. Rylance, on the other hand, once in character, ceases interaction with the audience; instead, Rylance’s Olivia shoots disapproving looks at Maria and floats back and forth across the stage making small, prim gestures from her wrists with her handkerchief. Dramaturgically, this distinction makes sense, and we expect different behavior from low comic than from high comic characters. Yet even though the other actors more or less ignore the audience while dressing, Rylance interacts.

wearing female clothing. Female characters are discernible not through actor's bodies but through their historically recreated wigs, layers of make-up, and elaborate costume pieces; similarly, male characters wear doublets, dress in breeches, and carry swords. While in other productions such props and costume pieces certainly indicate gender, for the Globe's *Twelfth Night* these artificial pieces become emblematic of an actor's transition into his role. Although they indicate historicity and authenticity, the fastidiously recreated corsets and rapiers become indicative of a character's gender.

Thus, the act of changing into costume complicates the Globe's claim of simple historical recreation; the action of putting on women's clothes is simultaneously historical, performative, and transforms the male actors into female characters. Gender is exposed as a socio-theatrical construction; and this exposure suggests porosity to boundaries that might otherwise be construed as fixed. The Globe's production calls further attention to actors' gender by using women as dressers in its tiring scene (see figures 4.1 and 4.5). While several male stage hands clear benches and move tables, women assist Rylance, Michael Brown (Viola), and Peter Shorey (Maria), helping stuff them into corsets, fasten wigs, and adjust their skirts and farthingales. Shorey suggested, in "Queer Eye for the Straight Play," that corsets made him breathe and move differently as Maria than when he played male roles in Globe productions. While other actors lounge easily on tables and stand with legs propped on benches after they have changed into costume, once the dressers lace their corsets, Rylance, Brown, and Shorey can no longer slouch – their restricted bodies are stiff and erect. Thus bound, the actors' arms can no longer lift higher than their shoulders and they lose the ability to bend over and assist others in moving set pieces. This restriction is further noticeable as the cross-

gender actors begin to move. Several actors clomp around the stage, pulling on boots and slapping backs, while Rylance and Shorey begin to glide, limited by their costume pieces into taking smaller steps; their flowing movement distinguishes their characters as highly stylized versions of femininity.<sup>16</sup>

Nonetheless, the Globe's production seems less queer and more a fetishized fiction of ideal historical representation. Regardless of the implications of the possibility of gender as transformative, the audience is encouraged to react to the costumes in much the same way they do when they hear Elizabethan music or stand with the groundlings in the Globe's courtyard, as if at "It's a Small World" for Shakespeare. It adheres to the presentation of history as tourism, a Disney version of the early modern theatrical stage. Gender is exposed as performative, but only as a means to authenticate the actors' own performances and offer the audience a means to commune with Shakespeare and actors from the original Globe.<sup>17</sup> Historical recreation both permeates and encumbers the Globe's production, to the point that Rylance disavows completely any queer pleasure derivable from its performance.

In contrast, Propeller's *Twelfth Night* treats the transformation of male actors into female roles not as a historical imperative but as a theatrical device. This idea of clothing

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<sup>16</sup> Nicholas de Jongh noted the inspiration of the "kabuki technique of onnagata" that helps Rylance move in "a tiny, mincing shuffle." For many reviewers, Rylance in particular surpasses the Globe's stated goal of historical recreation. Roger Foss called Rylance "a kabuki matriarch wearing a golden coronet," while Susannah Clapp said that Rylance had "a skimming walk and stiff geisha gestures." See Nicholas de Jongh, *The Evening Standard*, May 23, 2002; Roger Foss, *What's On*, May 29, 2002; Susannah Clapp, *Observer*, June 16, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Recent seasons at the Globe have featured no cross-gender cast actors. *Richard II* and *Edward II* (2003) are the most recent full company all-male productions while *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Richard III* (2003) are the most recent all-female productions. In 2005, Edward Hogg played Miranda in *The Tempest*; because it was a three actor show Hogg also played Ariel, Antonio, and Trinculo – this production featured female singers and dancers.

as symbolic of gender and transformation is a central theme of the play. Bruce R. Smith points out that in *Twelfth Night*, “Clothing is fetishized from start to finish: it is invested with transformative powers.”<sup>18</sup> In rejecting historical authenticity, Propeller instead embraces exaggeration, artifice, and extremity – three key facets of the Citz’s style. With *Twelfth Night*, and its on-tour companion piece, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Propeller makes little effort to conceal the masculinity of its actors; instead, Propeller follows the Citz’s habit of radical drag. That is, choosing costumes that reveal body hair and male musculature on female characters, while at the same time playing women’s roles with full make-up, costume, and accessories (see figures 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8).<sup>19</sup>

The two productions, *Twelfth Night* and *Taming of the Shrew*, toured in tandem with the same repertory of actors acting in both plays, and both productions likewise shared in their aesthetic approaches. Both performed gender in a manner suggestive of radical drag. The correlation between the two Propeller productions, while perhaps tacit, can nonetheless be evocative for those members of the audience who attended both: seeing Dugald Bruce-Lockhart play Olivia one night and Petruchio the next provides an insight into gender’s instability as he moves from ultra-masculine to hyper-feminine (see figures 4.6 and 4.7). Propeller’s appropriation of a Citz’s strategy of performance displays femininity as an ironic affectation, a self-conscious commentary on gender’s mutability.

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce R. Smith, *Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001), 16.

<sup>19</sup> Propeller’s *The Taming of the Shrew* was the official *Shrew* of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Complete Works in 2007, and the only cross-gendered production presented as part of the Complete Works.



While Propeller's *Twelfth Night* lacks a literal dressing scene, Edward Hall stages his actors' transformation from male to female in *Shrew*'s induction. While many companies cut these scenes in performance, dramaturgically they present a play within a play – and here, the induction helps establish cross-dressing as an aesthetic of performance. Hall uses the induction to good advantage, introducing the dramatic situation as a scheme dreamt up to teach the drunkard Christopher Sly (Bruce-Lockhart) to be a better husband to his intended wife. Before *Shrew* begins, actors mingle with the audience as if guests at a wedding, completely ignoring the fourth wall. The lights lower, the wedding guests move to positions on the stage, the wedding march starts, and a father escorts his daughter to the altar. However, the groom, the drunken Sly, falls onto several wedding guests and passes out cold. The bride runs off stage in despair, followed by the majority of the wedding guests.

This action sets the events of the play in motion and specifically contextualizes cross-dressing. The bride's father (Bob Barrett, later Baptista) plots his revenge, alone on stage save for his faithful page Barthol'mew (Simon Scardifield, later Katherine) and Bruce-Lockhart (passed out). "Sirs," Barrett announces as he looks about into the audience, "I will practice on this drunken man [he gestures towards Sly]... Belike some noble gentleman that means / (Traveling some journey) to repose him here."<sup>20</sup> As part of his plan, Barrett orders Scardifield to dress "in all suits like a lady" and "bear himself with honorable action, / Such as he hath observ'd in noble ladies / Unto their lords, by them accomplished" (106, 110-12). Scardifield at first balks, sighing loudly and shaking

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<sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction.i.36 & 75-6. I shall indicate subsequent citations parenthetically. All textual references are from *The Norton Shakespeare*, one-volume edition, ed. Stephen Greenblatt *et al.*, (New York: Norton, 1997).

his head; however, eventually persuaded by Barrett's argument, he smiles and complies with Barrett's request to play Bruce-Lockhart's wife, setting both the lesson and the events of *Shrew* into action.

Yet as Sly's wife – and later as Katherine – Scardifield mixes iconic masculine characteristics, notably a hairy chest and shoulders, with iconic aspects of femininity, namely a dress (see figure 4.7). While Bruce-Lockhart's Sly initially stares incredulously at his wife's hairy chest, his eventual acquiescence teaches the audience how to react to men playing women's roles. By the induction's end, Sly has fully accepted Scardifield's Barthol'mew as his bride. As a messenger enters and announces the start of the play within a play, Bruce-Lockhart even goes so far as to pat the seat next to him and demand, "Come, madam wife, sit by my side" (ii.142-3). In this instance, text drives performance – the dramatic situation would have been different if Sly had said, "Get thee gone, foul beast!" Instead, initial disbelief morphs into a desire to get on with the artifice of the play.

With *Twelfth Night*, Propeller treats the transformation from male to female with a similar sense of irony. While there is no pre-show dressing scene as part of Hall's *Twelfth Night*, the company does stage the shipwreck that leads Viola to disguise herself as Cesario. The lights are low and melancholic, the actors dress in black suits with carnival masks, acting as a chorus when not featured, playing instruments, creating sound effects, and moving set pieces on and off stage (see figure 4.9). Violins play as Feste (Tony Bell) steps forward, holding a large bottle with a model ship in it, which he tips up and down, swirls to the right and left. Coordinated, the chorus lifts Viola (Tam Williams) and her twin brother Sebastian (Joe Flynn) into the air. They try to hang on to one

another, but the chorus tosses them apart, depositing Sebastian downstage center. Clad in a white vest and matching baggy cream trousers, Flynn's Sebastian slowly gathers his wits and wanders off stage. Next, the chorus deposits Williams in exactly the same spot downstage center (see figure 4.10). From here, Williams steps forward, wearing a white dressing gown that both matches Flynn's ensemble and marks Williams as female. Placing a lily behind his ear, Williams speaks Viola's first line, "What country, friends, is this?"

The synchronicity of the choreography, with the shipwreck seemingly depositing the same person in the same spot twice, promotes the idea that gender can be indicated by costume. Both actors have dark brown hair cut in matching short styles, are youthful and attractive, and wear white garments. The only way to distinguish between Viola and Sebastian, other than clothing, is her flower, which becomes symbolic of her femaleness when she removes it in the next scene as she becomes Cesario. Thus, clothing becomes symbolically gendered, as it was in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*; Viola wears a gown while Sebastian wears trousers, and the audience identifies and accepts Viola as female. Just as Adrian Lester and Simon Coates stepped to the left on "all the women merely players," Propeller's actors are also aware of the artificiality of men playing women's parts. Like Lester and Coates before him/her, Williams' Viola encourages the audience to accept his/her transformation as part of the theatrical experience.

Propeller thus draws from previous instances of cross-gender cast Shakespeare. Hall's staging highlights the masculine and feminine characteristics of some of its characters, while presenting ambiguous representations in others. Gender matters, for Propeller, and the actors rely on costumes and accessories to perform it. Without those

pieces, gender differences are difficult to distinguish; later in the play, when they both wear matching grey suits, the ability to discern Sebastian from Viola, male from female, is lost (see figure 4.11). The influence of previous productions might be intentional or incidental; however, the resulting performances, with iconic elements of masculinity matched with iconic female signifiers, remain open to the possibility of queerness. Propeller's actors swap gender as a theatrical function, relying on either the remembrance of *Shrew*'s Induction or a staged storm to suggest the blurring of male or female. Williams' initial appearance can be compared with Flynn's – because Propeller's audience knows that Sebastian did indeed survive the shipwreck, it then becomes possible to marvel at how much the two actors look alike. The ambiguity of Propeller's *Twelfth Night* and *Shrew* leads the audience to recognize that gender is performed and to disregard their understanding of reality, in much the same fashion as the Citz'.

Cheek by Jowl's *Twelfth Night*, unsurprisingly, invokes the company's earlier all-male *As You Like It*. Declan Donnellan presents gender as fluid, performative, and as easy to change as walking across the stage. The production opens with what has become a familiar Cheek by Jowl trope: the entire company takes to the stage dressed in black trousers and crisp white shirts, carrying a variety of musical instruments, which they begin to play. To the background of a light *basso nova*, various company members one by one extend their hands to the audience and speak the same phrase in Russian, translated in projections as Viola's line, "My father was of Messaline."<sup>21</sup> As the phrase circulates among the actors, repeated by all the members of the cast in turn, the

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<sup>21</sup> Because the actors spoke in Russian, when referring to the words spoken by the actors, I rely on Shakespeare's text. In performance, to the disdain of more than one critic, Shakespeare's text shone on screens that bordered the proscenium.

company's attention settles on a slight, brown haired young man (Andrey Kuzichev). Two actors pull the young man forward and wrap him in a skirt. Kuzichev blinks, then giggles, covers his mouth with both hands, as if to ask, "Are you serious?" Then the actor does a double take at the other cast members before he accepts his role (Viola) with a shrug of his shoulders and crosses off-stage. Yet when Kuzichev moves, a gendered difference is immediately noticeable from the initial march around the stage: instead of heavy clomping, he skips lightly away. The boundaries between male and female are so porous that the addition of a skirt is all a Cheek by Jowl actor needs to become a female character.

Cheek by Jowl's *Twelfth Night* presents gender transformation with an ease that leaves it open to the possibility of performing queer Shakespeare. It lacks the loud exuberance of Propeller's transformation, and the workmanlike approach of the Globe, instead alluding to a moment that opened *As You Like It*, when Adrian Lester and Simon Coates stepped to the left while all other men stepped right. Donnellan takes a gentler approach than his fellow directors of *Twelfth Night* do: to the serenade of tambourines, guitars, and maracas, a wrap-around skirt and a scarf signify gender. It is also very simple – the actor's bodies become the instruments that will perform the play, their characters, and the attendant gender. The moment in which Kuzichev giggles and steps forward, highly choreographed yet seamlessly incorporated into the play's opening, prepares the audience for the performance that follows, and for the possibility of queerness.

Playing Queer

As Chapters Two and Three demonstrate, the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl's productions of Shakespeare highlighted homoerotic attraction. At the Citizens' Theatre, such expressions were most transparent in Achilles and Patroclus as glam rockers and lovers in *Troilus and Cressida* (1973). Cheek by Jowl, on the other hand, took this even further in *As You Like It*, staging Celia's devotion to Rosalind as romantic love and making Jaques' sexual identity the root of his melancholy. Because the experience of the outsider is such an important component of lesbian and gay identity and queer theatre, it follows that reflecting such experiences might also prove a useful strategy for performing queer Shakespeare.

In *Twelfth Night*, often one of the most explicit and stable homoerotic significations is that of Antonio's relationship with Sebastian.<sup>22</sup> However, Antonio

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<sup>22</sup> Janet Adelman first addressed Antonio's homoerotic attachment, calling his love for Sebastian "the strongest and most direct expression of homoerotic love in Shakespeare's plays" and arguing that his "disappointment" is a crucial aspect of the play's final scene, providing "at this moment an image of loss that it can do little to assuage, since at the end Antonio finds Sebastian only to stand silently by, watching him commit himself to Olivia" (88-89). See Janet Adelman, "Male Bonding in Shakespeare's Comedies," in *'Rough Magic': Renaissance Essays in Honor of C.L. Barber*, ed. Peter Erickson and Coppélia Kahn (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 73-103. Stephen Orgel refers to Antonio and Sebastian as an "overtly homosexual couple" (27). See Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage take Boys for Women?," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989), 7-29. Valerie Traub argues, "Antonio's words allude to the perils in early modern culture of an exclusively homoerotic passion: in order to remain in the presence of one's beloved, 'danger' must be figuratively, if not literally, transformed into 'sport.'" See Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 132-3. Joseph Pequigney claims "that in taking a wife Sebastian will not and need not suffer the 'rack and torture' of losing his male lover [Antonio]" and, in a footnote, imagines an appropriate staging for the final scene: "If I were to direct the play, I would want Olivia, Sebastian (in the middle), and Antonio to leave the stage together, arm in arm. But the difficulty is that Antonio throughout the scene is under guard and at the end has yet to be set free. That could be taken care of by a mere wave of the Duke's hand. Such a gesture, though without an authorizing stage direction, is in line with the script. Everything points to Antonio's imminent release" (206). See Joseph Pequigney, "The Two Antonios and Same-Sex Love in *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 201-21. Laurie Osborne observes, "Inevitably, it seems, our assessments of *Twelfth Night*'s treatment of homoeroticism depend on how we read the end of the play – specifically on how we understand Antonio's position at the final resolution" (108-109). See Laurie E. Osborne, "Shakespeare Performed: Antonio's Pardon," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45 (1994): 108-114. In a recent edition of *Twelfth Night*, Bruce R. Smith sums up his argument from "Making a Difference: Male/Male 'Desire' in Tragedy, Comedy, and Tragi-

presents a problem to the heteronormative order restored at the end of *Twelfth Night*. If one of the premises of comedy is to chart the transformation of characters from homosocial twosomes into heterosexual marriages, then what happens to Antonio?<sup>23</sup> He and Sebastian represent a homosocial, and in some productions and readings, loving couple that nonetheless must find suitable mates of the opposite sex to fulfill the comedic requirement. Sebastian comes to this easily, and his development from weeping boy to married man occurs in the Fourth Act, well before the play's climax, when Olivia successfully woos and weds Sebastian after mistaking him for Cesario.<sup>24</sup> Antonio, on the other hand, never takes a wife.

In and of itself, Antonio's inability to find a suitable female companion does not necessitate playing his intense affection for Sebastian as erotic love, but it does open up that possibility. Thus, analyzing how a production stages Antonio's attachment to Sebastian, and how Sebastian treats Antonio, becomes crucial to understanding how a production performs erotic desire and sexual identity.<sup>25</sup> One approach is to reject the

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Comedy" in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 127-149 and affirms that "Sebastian...inspires in Antonio a passion that in unabashedly homoerotic." See Bruce R. Smith, "Introduction" in *Twelfth Night: Texts and Contexts* (Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 15. For more, see Valerie Traub, "Recent Studies in Homoeroticism," in *English Literary Renaissance*, 30.2 (2000), 284-329.

<sup>23</sup> The "problem" is not unique to Antonio. At the end of *As You Like It*, Jaques exits before the wedding dance in search of the banished Duke, exchanging the homosocial foresters for homosocial monasticism. In *The Merchant of Venice*, another Antonio ends the play with no mate and no prospects—after almost forfeiting a pound of flesh for his beloved friend. See Alan Sinfield, "How to Read *The Merchant of Venice* without Being Heterosexist," in *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Materialism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 53-67 and 202.

<sup>24</sup> The text instructs Sebastian to weep as he relates the story of his sister's demise to Antonio: "She is drowned already, sir, with salt water, though I seem to drown her remembrance again with more" (II.i.30-32). This contrasts, as well, with a later scene where Sebastian indicates his manhood by handily dispatching Sir Toby and Sir Andrew.

<sup>25</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, the name Sebastian has become something of a gay icon in its own right. Oscar Wilde took the name Sebastian Melmouth upon his release from Reading Gaol as homage to the famously penetrated St. Sebastian. Since Wilde's death, many gay writers and artists have

possibility of male homoerotic desire; as a result, such an Antonio will play the relationship perhaps as suggestive of the ideal of intense male-bonding or “romantic friendship” but carefully avoiding erotic connotations.<sup>26</sup> Antonio might feel honor-bound to protect Sebastian, having found him homeless and adrift, and thus duty, obligation, and the rules of hospitality drive his devotion. Another approach is for Antonio to portray his affection for Sebastian as both romantic and erotic. However, given the textual and generic constraints of the play’s text, in these instances Antonio will quite often end the play alone, woefully looking on as Sebastian celebrates his newfound love for Olivia.<sup>27</sup> The ending in these productions tends to emphasize homoeroticism’s loss as well as heterosexuality’s gain – yet in the end, Antonio will be alone. In these productions, the audience becomes aware of what Antonio loses, Sebastian gains, and at what cost. Another possibility is that the actor playing Antonio will reject both the normative representation of straight friendship and the melancholic loss of gay romance. Such

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taken Sebastian’s life story and emphasized various rumors about it, in effect suggesting that Sebastian may have been gay. Among the queer accounts of St. Sebastian include Georges Eekhoud’s “Saint Sebastien dans la Peinture” (1909), Yukio Mishima’s *Confessions of a Mask* (1948), in which the main protagonist’s (homo)sexual awakening occurs while viewing Guido Reni’s San Sebastiano, Tennessee Williams’ poem “San Sebastiano de Sodoma” (1954), which examines both the gay and religious sides of Sebastian, and Derek Jarman’s *Sebastiane* (1976), a controversial film centering on the homosexual practices of an outpost of Roman soldiers. See also Richard A. Kaye, “Losing His Religion: Saint Sebastian as Contemporary Gay Martyr” in *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures* ed. Peter Horne and Reina Lewis (New York: Routledge, 1996), 86-105.

<sup>26</sup> Michel de Montaigne’s treatise, “On Friendship” from *Essays* (1590). Montaigne’s devotion to Estienne de la Boétie, the basis for this essay, is often called “romantic friendship.” Montaigne’s friends share an intense, passionate bond, however Montaigne is careful to disavow the possibility of sodomy or pederasty. Of course, the sincerity of Montaigne’s disavowal is a matter of dispute.

<sup>27</sup>This enacts, to some extent, Alan Bray’s conceptualization of friendship. Bray argues that a form of “voluntary kinship” he calls friendship flourished in medieval and early modern society (extending even into the nineteenth century). This relationship, cohered in rituals similar to marriage, was embraced by and embedded in broader social networks. Friends ritually and traditionally shared the table, the bed, the body, the letter, and the “kiss of peace.” Such a relationship was distinguishable from, but vulnerable to, charges of sodomy, existing alongside marriage as a bond that tied families together. See Alan Bray, *The Friend* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), especially “The Body of the Friend,” 140-176.



productions will support unconventional resolutions, such as the erotic threesomes suggested by Alan Sinfield, who advocates the continuing of Antonio and Sebastian's sexual relationship after Sebastian's marriage to Olivia, or the pairing of Antonio with some other unattached male character, such as the Sea Captain who initially rescues Viola.<sup>28</sup>

Shakespeare's Globe presents Antonio's exchanges with Sebastian in a way that defends against the possibility of eroticism between men. Sebastian (Rhys Matthews) and Antonio (Patrick Brennan) stand on opposite sides of the stage and shout their lines at one another, never touching, never approaching one another. There is little sense of intimacy or erotic connection; rather, Brennan's Antonio plays his relationship with Matthews' Sebastian in terms of hospitality and obligation. This bewildered some theater critics. Nicholas de Jongh finds that for Sebastian and Antonio "to pretend" they "are just good friends outrages a production that honorably aims to restore *Twelfth Night's*

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<sup>28</sup> The Queen's Company's all-female *Twelfth Night* (Rebecca Patterson, 2008) enacted the first possibility – at an after-show talk-back, on 15 November, 2008, the actor who played Sebastian told me she imagined "Antonio will come over and visit – a lot!" However, throughout the production I was struck by the erotic relationship between Antonio (Dionne Audain) and Sebastian (Amy Driesler). Patterson's direction left little doubt that Antonio and Sebastian's relationship was sexual – the first time they appear on stage together, Sebastian sits dressing at the edge of a bed while Antonio lies face-down covered with rumpled sheets. Driesler even reaches out and caresses Audain's bottom while Celine Dion's rendition of the *Titanic* theme ("My Heart Will Go On") plays in the background. I had always considered the scene between Antonio and Sebastian to be an *aubade*; yet this is the first time I had seen it staged in that way. In the talk-back that followed the performance, Patterson, Driesler, and Audain discussed the erotic and physical deliberation with which they staged the scene, while four audience members mentioned relief at seeing gay Sebastian and Antonio "finally." Alan Sinfield has suggested the possibility of Sebastian leaving the stage "flanked by both Olivia and Antonio" and goes on to point out "why such an arrangement is more likely to suit Olivia (who loves the still-impossible Cesario and has only a forced and formal marriage with Sebastian)." See Sinfield, *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality*, 14-15. Sinfield names this a "gay reading," and points out that it "falls outside dominant expectations." Sinfield's previous work on dissident taxonomies might also be helpful. See Alan Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), especially 9-31.

ambisexual aura.”<sup>29</sup> For de Jongh, “ambisexual” should include homoerotic possibility, rather than excluding it. Sarah Hemming notes, “Strangely too, the production sidesteps the question of Antonio’s evident devotion to Sebastian.”<sup>30</sup> Antonio ends the play watching as Sebastian dotes on Olivia – there is no “happy end” for Antonio.

Propeller similarly disallows any erotic charge between Antonio and Sebastian. Instead, the relationship is almost businesslike, with Antonio (Alasdair Craig) indebted to Sebastian. Joe Flynn’s Sebastian shows emotion, weeping when recalling the last time he saw his sister alive, yet Craig’s Antonio seems reluctant to touch him. Instead of a sympathetic hug, Antonio awkwardly pats Sebastian’s shoulder after he painfully reveals Viola’s fate: “She is drown’d already, sir, with salt water, though I seem to drown her remembrance again with more” (II.i.30-2). Because Craig plays his part with no passion for Flynn, and there is scant emotional connection between the pair, Antonio fades into the background of the final scene, displaced and replaced by Bruce-Lockhart’s Olivia. This staging choice, perhaps intended to work against what may have become a production cliché, nevertheless provided an unsatisfying end to a production that seemed otherwise open to the possibility of eroticism between men.

Cheek by Jowl’s production, on the other hand, follows the precedent of the Citz’ and Donnellan’s earlier *As You Like It*, presenting Antonio (Mikhail Zhigalov) as romantically attached to Sebastian (Sergey Mukhin). Zhigalov and Mukhin play their opening exchange like an *aubade*, or poem of lovers separating at dawn.<sup>31</sup> The scene

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<sup>29</sup> Nicholas de Jongh, *The Evening Standard*, May 23, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah Hemming, *Financial Times*, May 28, 2002.

<sup>31</sup> *Aubade* poems typically deal with a lover leaving the morning after consummation. Because sixteenth century poets typically dealt with the Petrarchan conceit of unsatisfied love, *aubade* is not usually

begins with the pair close to one another and distant music playing in the background. Zhigalov's Antonio asks Mukhin's Sebastian, gently brushing the hair back from his companion's face: "Will you stay no longer? / Nor will you not that I go with you?" (II.i.1-2). For the Globe and Propeller's productions, these questions served to dramaturgically establish Sebastian's whereabouts since the shipwreck that opens the play. After all, the Globe's Sebastian has not previously appeared on stage and an entire act has passed since Propeller's Sebastian was dumped onto the shores of Illyria by the storm. For *Cheek by Jowl*, however, the exchange offers a clue to the depth of Antonio's devotion to Sebastian. Practically whispering, while guitars strum lightly in the background, Zhigalov's Antonio brushes Mukhin's Sebastian's shoulder, and then his chest, and Mukhin responds by placing his hand on Zhigalov's face. Because the actors speak in Russian, the actors' proximity and movements primarily convey meaning. In this way, the scene visually alludes to another famous Shakespearean *aubade*: Romeo's departure from Verona in *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>32</sup> While audiences of *Twelfth Night* might

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considered a major Elizabethan form. It regained popularity in the seventeenth century though, as evidenced in John Donne's "The Sun Rising" (from *Poems by J.D. With elegies on the authors death*, 1633).

<sup>32</sup> The morning after their wedding night and the sexual consummation of their marriage, Juliet asks Romeo, "Wilt thou be gone?" (III.iv.1). Romeo's reply, "I must be gone and live, or stay and die," centers on the connection of "stay" to "die" (11). The death he foresees is both literal and figurative. On the one hand, if the Prince catches Romeo in Verona, Romeo must pay for killing Tybalt and defying the ordinance against public brawling. However, as a newlywed, if he remains in Juliet's bedchamber, he will most certainly experience the other early modern meaning of death, sexual climax. Juliet urges Romeo, "Therefore *stay* yet, thou need'st not be gone" (my emphasis, 16). The repetition of the word *stay*, as well as its connection to sexual gratification, might carry across Juliet and Romeo to Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio also expresses his adoration for Sebastian in verse, a syntax quite often used to indicate a love-connection. Antonio finds his separation from Sebastian unbearable, yet he faces imminent physical danger if he follows his friend: "I have many enemies in Orsino's court, / Else would I very shortly see thee there. / But come what may, I do adore thee so / That danger shall seem sport, and I will go" (II.i.45-8.) Antonio's language changes from blocks of prose to lines of iambic pentameter with an end-rhymed couplet ("so" and "go") similar to sonnets. For instance, in the scene that immediately preceded this, as Olivia fall in love with Viola, her prose changes to verse. Even without a dramaturgical understanding of

not immediately connect the two scenes, the actions of Zhigalov while trying to comfort Mukhin suggest the imminent parting of lovers.<sup>33</sup>

Repeating its previous inclusion of a queer outsider in *As You Like It*'s wedding dance, Cheek by Jowl includes Antonio as part of a queer disruption of *Twelfth Night*'s conventional comic ending. While Antonio stands alone and abandoned at the end of the Globe and Propeller's productions, Zhigalov's Antonio joins with Feste (Evgeny Pisarev) in the marriage celebration that concludes the play – thus paired, the duo joins the other couples (Orsino and Viola, Sebastian and Olivia, Toby and Maria) in a wedding dance. The pairing of Antonio and Feste brings together two outsiders; Zhigalov's Antonio seems well-suited with Pisarev's Feste, whose performance as an effeminate dandy and social critic prepares the audience for the liaison with Antonio.

Following in the tradition established at the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*, Pisarev presents Feste a recognizably queer figure. He sports a powdered, pale-white complexion and large beauty mark similar to *As You Like It*'s Jaques. However, Feste's rouge and lipstick – more pronounced than Olivia's, Viola's, or Maria's make-up

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early modern syntax, an audience member reading the English text projected onto screens might note a change in the way Olivia's speech is presented. Antonio's prose undergoes a similar alteration as he considers whether to pursue Sebastian. In addition, Antonio's decision to follow Sebastian alludes to a similar exchange between another same-sex couple: Celia and Rosalind in *As You Like It*. After declaring that her love for Rosalind "teacheth thee that thou and I am one," Celia asks, "Shall we be sundered? Shall we part, sweet girl?" (I.iii.97-98.) In that instance, the answer is Celia's self-imposed banishment – she refuses to abandon her "sweet Rose." To remain with her love, she will face Arden's unknown perils. In much the same way that Celia's selfless pursuit of Rosalind becomes a pressure point for lesbian signification in *As You Like It*, so can Antonio's willingness to face danger indicate the depth of his feelings for Sebastian. See my previous chapter on Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* for more on lesbian Celia scholarship.

<sup>33</sup> We know that *Romeo and Juliet* preceded *Twelfth Night* chronologically, but for some twentieth century audiences there is a further, albeit tenuous, connection between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night – Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998). In the film, young Will (Joseph Fiennes) falls for Viola De Lesseps (Gwyneth Paltrow) while rehearsing *Romeo and Juliet*. When Will and Viola separate at the film's end, Will promises to name the heroine of his next play, which Queen Elizabeth (Judi Dench) orders to be an entertainment for Twelfth Night, after his lost love, Viola.

– cannot hide his advanced years (see figure 4.12). In spite of his age, he still apparently desires sexual contact, repeatedly grabbing at the other men in erotic ways. Early in the play, Pisarev’s Feste pinches Kuzichev’s rump when he is dressed as Cesario. Later, Feste sits on Aguecheek’s lap and sings him a love song, an action he again repeats with the Duke (Vladimir Vdovichenkov, see figure 4.13). When not on another man’s lap, Pisarev flamboyantly plucks imaginary grapes from the air and then passes them back to his audience (a favorite strategy of drag queens) while singing his songs. His vocalization, an even mix of Édith Piaf and Harvey Fierstein, is a mélange of emotional vulnerability, world-weary fatigue, and torch song sentimentality. It is easy to believe Feste has wasted his youth in search of love and never found it. Now, older and forlorn, vainly seeking to retain his looks, still making attempts at physical contact with other men, Feste is alone. In this production, Antonio and Feste share this isolation, as well as their attraction to other men. In as much as any pairings at the end of Shakespearean comedies make sense, this Antonio and Feste seem well-matched and content at the play’s end – they are simply another part of a reconceived order, a radical update to old-fashioned traditions.<sup>34</sup>

Donnellan included a similar union in the finale to his *As You Like It*, where he suggested that it was possible to replace the idyllic with a more realistic view of the world, a view that accounts for rather than discounts same-sex couplings. In the years that have passed since *As You Like It* toured, many of the crises that Donnellan’s

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<sup>34</sup> Even Malvolio (Dmitry Scherbina), previously abused, finds his way back into the final tableau. No longer wearing yellow stockings, cross-garters, and a straightjacket, Malvolio appears in a white suit and serves champagne to the wedding party. His final line, “I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you”, is a whispered, gentle aside, rather than a vengeful threat (V.i.1). At least that’s how I interpreted it – it could also be incredibly sly and sinister to end with a whisper instead of a shout.

production responded to in 1991 (legalized homophobia in Section 28, no sustainable treatment for HIV/AIDS, and rising violence against gay men) have changed. Of course, attitudes about homosexuality can still be divisive and same-sex marriage remains a contentious issue; however, in 1991, marriage equality was almost unimaginable. Today, the idea of gay unions taking place alongside straight wedding ceremonies is more common, particularly in the West; it thus registers more realistically to post-millennial audiences.<sup>35</sup> The disruption Cheek by Jowl enables in pairing Antonio with Feste is softer, more like the *basso nova* that begins and ends the play than the angry chants associated with queer activism in the 1990s: “We’re here! We’re queer! Get used to it!” While the climax of Donnellan’s *As You Like It* insists on the insertion of queer subjectivities into an otherwise straight world, this ending’s audacity lies in its suggestion that there can an easy, almost breathless transition from the old order to the new. When Jacques joined with Hymen in that earlier production, the audience gasped, laughed, and then applauded. Ten years later as Antonio danced with Feste, some undoubtedly still gasped, but others sighed with relief, appreciating the organic incorporation of a fully sexualized Antonio and Feste into the social order.

### Enacting Possibility

All-male productions of *Twelfth Night* have the ability to elucidate even further the multivalent possibilities of gender identity and sexual object choice suggested by the play’s subtitle, *What You Will*. In early modern vernacular, *What You Will* connoted a

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<sup>35</sup> This not to suggest the issue of marriage equality is settled or even the open-armed, universal embracement of homosexuality. Although a number of countries recognize either civil unions or same-sex marriage, homosexuality remains illegal in several places, punishable even by death in some instances.

specifically erotic connection between an individual and his/her desires. “Will” referenced a person’s sex organ, male and female, in addition to the connotation of determination and desire, and served as both as noun and as verb.<sup>36</sup> In keeping with this, *Twelfth Night* represents a variety of English early modern erotic tastes, exploring man’s love for woman (Orsino-Olivia, Toby-Maria, Malvolio-Olivia), male’s attraction to male (Antonio-Sebastian, Orsino-Cesario), woman’s desire for a younger male (Olivia-Cesario, Olivia-Sebastian), female in pursuit of female (Olivia-Viola), and female passively enjoying being pursued by another woman (Viola-Olivia).<sup>37</sup>

The play also treats several other alternative erotic options, which might be problematic to certain members of modern audiences, as unexceptional. These include the rejection of the Greek model of pederasty (older male-younger male) in favor of an equitable model of homosexuality with young man pursuing young man (early modern boy-actor-early modern boy-actor) as well as triangulations of desire that reiterate the “traffic in women” (amidst ribald wordplay, Toby and Aguecheek team up to woo Toby’s niece, Olivia).<sup>38</sup> In early modern romantic comedy, mistaken identity and disguise, as

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<sup>36</sup> From the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “will” as a noun in 1602 might refer to “carnal desire or appetite” (1.2), “that which one desires” (1.3), or “expressing the natural disposition to do something, and hence habitual action” (1.18). Shakespeare uses “will” to connote erotic embodiment elsewhere, and in particular sonnet 135 (“Whoever hath her wish, thou hast her will”) and sonnet 136 (“If thy soul check thee that I come so near,/ Sweat to thy blind soul that I was thy Will.”) Regarding the multiple meanings of “will” in these sonnets, Bruce R. Smith points out, “The valences of the word are wittily pushed to the limits” and “will can be taken to mean volition, the auxiliary verb will, lust, penis, vagina, and the nickname Will, sometimes all at the same time.” Smith, *Twelfth Night*, 13.

<sup>37</sup> In the latter instance, Valerie Traub points out, “It is as object of another woman’s desire that Cesario finds her own erotic voice.” See Valerie Traub, *The Renaissance Of Lesbianism on the Early Modern Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

<sup>38</sup> Gayle Rubin analyzed this phenomenon in “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157-210. On the triangulation I describe, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). In *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Sedgwick describes her critical

Jean E. Howard puts it, become conduits for “the contamination of sexual kinds and the multiplication of erotic possibility.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, “what you will” opens a door to all sorts of sexual opportunities, and *Twelfth Night* favors a plurality of sexual object choices.

As a result, the decision to utilize an all-male cast has the potential further to disrupt gender and sexual identities. While such a casting decision could conceivably neither add to nor detract from the staging of Antonio’s homoerotic attachment to Sebastian, the use of only male actors would make a tremendous difference in Viola/Cesario’s interactions with both Orsino and Olivia – such as when Jonathan Kent played Cleopatra at the Citizens’ Theatre in 1972. When played by a woman, Viola as Cesario expends a great deal of time masking one set of gendered behaviors while emulating another – after all, she plays a female who is pretending to be male. In this instance, gender is certainly performative; however, the homoerotic implication of Orsino’s attraction to Cesario is difficult to convey when played by a female actor. When acted by a male, though, Viola/Cesario’s performance has the potential to produce a queer effect both by blurring the boundaries of gender and sexual identity and by crossing them.

This is not to suggest that all male-acted, cross-gendered Violas inevitably are queer. For example, a male actor playing Viola/Cesario who draws inspiration from theatrical productions in the historical past, attempts to recreate history and remains disinterested in homoerotic possibility, would certainly register differently than a male-

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project in *Between Men* as “focused on the oppressive effects on women and men of a cultural system in which male-male desire became widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular desire involving a woman” (15).

<sup>39</sup> Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 121.



acted Viola/Cesario who finds herself the object of erotic attraction from both Olivia and Orsino. In some productions, Orsino's attachment to Cesario is palpable and dangerous, and when played by a male, this threat becomes amplified. Likewise, a male Olivia's affection for Cesario might also appear as homoerotic, if not evoking lesbianism then still suggesting alternative erotic possibilities. Cross-gender casting, in other words, can accommodate variability in both gender and erotic identity.

The Globe's Michael Brown played Viola/Cesario in a manner that seems to favor a strategy of historical reenactment. As Viola, Brown looks lovely in a long blond wig and chartreuse gown, but these sumptuous early modern accoutrements outshine everything else (see figure 4.14). Especially because the audience watches the actors dress in the pre-show, the display of the process becomes a focus of attention: the actor's gender is almost irrelevant in the context of so many costume pieces and such an elaborate wig and make-up. Brown's performance, especially in his scenes with Rylance's Olivia, seems stiff and one-note; his voice sounds more falsetto than alto or tenor, and he lacks believability, passion, and tonal variation. Rylance, on the other hand, whoops, swoons, yelps, cries, shrieks, and wrings every possible laugh out of every line.

At odds with his actions in the dressing scene, Rylance's extravagant, flamboyant Olivia seems to draw on Citz's theatrical practice, where Rylance began his acting career in 1980. Whereas Kent made Cleopatra into a glamorous, radical drag queen, Rylance presents Olivia as homage to a different historical queen also known for her "drag" performances: Elizabeth I. Rylance's Olivia's stern facial expression, his headdress, hairstyle, texture and color of gown, white lace sleeves, and high white neck ruff seem modeled on the "Sieve Portrait" of Elizabeth (see figure 4.15). However, artifice and

exaggeration seem to drive Rylance's approach to the role, from Olivia's bleached-white face with crimson lips, to her relentless pursuit of Cesario. One moment floating across the stage as if on wheels, the next crumpled on the ground in despair, Rylance plays to both high and low extremes, all in an attempt to win Viola/Cesario's heart. Even Rylance's line delivery displays an over-abundance of emotions, stuttering over every conceivable double entendre and tripping inelegantly over words one moment, and precisely and formally proffering edicts the next. The dour Olivia in mourning who starts the play contrasts sharply with the animated Olivia in love. Whether his performance was an actor's *tour de force* – “beautifully judged” and “brilliantly comic” as Georgina Brown claims – or “prissy, superficial, sexless” and “flamboyantly at odds” with the rest of the production, as Nicholas de Jongh argues, Rylance's movements and actions set him apart from everyone else on stage, and the result is primarily comic.<sup>40</sup>

With Brown's Cesario and Liam Brennan's Orsino, however, the Globe moves beyond an imperative of historical reenactment or comedic presentation to insinuate a performance of sexual identity. When a female actor plays Viola playing Cesario, Orsino's attachment to Cesario can hint at the heteronormative resolution that will come at the play's end – such an attachment recommends Orsino's innate ability to discern Cesario's true nature. In the Globe's production, Orsino is hot for Cesario. Their erotic charge becomes especially clear when Feste (Peter Hamilton Dyer) sings a love song to Orsino and Cesario. Brennan's Orsino sits in his bedclothes on a bench next to Brown's Cesario while Feste begins, “Come away, come away death, /And in sad Cyprus let me

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<sup>40</sup> Georgina Brown, *Mail on Sunday*, June 2, 2002. Nicholas de Jongh, *The Evening Standard*, May 23, 2002.

be laid” (II.iv.50-1). As the song continues, Orsino slowly moves closer to Cesario, first staring at him, and then looking away. Cesario touches Orsino’s shoulder; Orsino grabs Cesario’s hand, reaches up, and removes his hat. They scoot close to each other while Feste sings, and look longingly at one another. Orsino takes Cesario’s left hand and moves it to his lap. Orsino leans in closer; with Cesario’s hand still in his lap, Orsino first touches, and then caresses Cesario’s face. Cesario lifts his free hand to Orsino’s face, they close their eyes, and lean in closer to kiss (see figure 4.16). Before their lips touch, Feste’s song abruptly ends; Brennan and Brown both stand and cross to opposite sides of the stage.

This scene presents a striking instance of gay desire. The clarity of the intent to kiss as well as the attraction that motivates the action suggests a wavering in a production that has otherwise seemed to reject homosexual contact. Their erotic connection extends to after the moment when Brown’s Cesario reveals to Brennan’s Orsino, “I am all the daughters of my father’s house, /And all the brothers too; and yet I know not” (120-1). After this admission, they grab one another in a passionate, lingering hug, which lasts so long that the audience begins to laugh, uncomfortable with the duration of the embrace.<sup>41</sup> Once again, they seem poised to kiss, when Brown’s Cesario suddenly breaks away, asking, “Sir, shall I to this lady?” (122) The moment abruptly ends, again without a kiss, but the Globe thus presents a flash of queerness in its performance of *Twelfth Night*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> This laughter occurred in the production I watched live as well as on three videos I viewed at the Globe’s archive.

<sup>42</sup> Liam Brennan played Marlowe’s *Edward II* the following season at the Globe in another cross-gender production. His Edward was just as big, butch, and sexy as his Orsino, and this time he actually kissed Brown (Spencer) as well as Gaveston (Thomas Kyd).

Propeller similarly suggests queer possibility in its promotional material for its production of *Twelfth Night*, by highlighting the body of a male actor (Tam Williams) playing a female role (Viola/Cesario, see figure 4.17). The images emphasize Williams' masculine features, and presenting them in comparison with iconic aspects of femininity, following the tradition of the Citz's Cleopatra. Williams' well-developed shoulders include the classic masculine v-shaped deltoid muscles, and a light dusting of hair covers his pectorals. His face, however, is hybrid: the right half appears male while the left half appears female. He signifies the masculine half by displaying significant whisker growth, a bushy eyebrow, and hair cut short; the female half has longer hair, tinted magenta, and sports a large hoop earring. This half suggests popular representations of cross-dressed characters (such as in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, 1994; *The Birdcage*, 1996; or even the classic *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 1975) and wears full face paint (lighter base makeup, large red mouth, bright pink blush, heavy eyeliner, and eye shadow painted thick). In this regard, he resembles Jonathan Kent as the Citz' Cleopatra – male and female, masculine and feminine. Additionally, the manipulation of Williams' features encapsulates both his performance as a female character in *Twelfth Night* and Viola's performance of Cesario in the play. This over-stylized representation of femininity has little in common with Williams' performance, however, for his Viola/Cesario more closely resembles the male half of the image. Yet in publicizing the production in this way, Propeller appears to be exploiting an androgyny and queer theatrical aesthetic derived from the Citz.'

Propeller's display of Williams' bare body also suggests that cross-gendered actor's body is not simply historical representation, but is emblematic of male beauty and

able to evoke desire. At the Citizens' Theatre, this phenomenon played out in allusion to imagery from beefcake magazines as part of the Citz's house style of performance; Propeller's *Twelfth Night* treats male bodies in a similar way – as able to elicit erotic desire – especially in the scene where Malvolio finds the letter purported to be from Olivia. As I discussed in Chapter Two, beefcake enables the body of the male model to become an object of gay male desire, and thus destabilizes heteronormative notions of desiring subject and desired object. As a backdrop to Malvolio's discovery and reading, Hall uses shirtless, fit actors (Alasdair Craig, Dominic Tighe, and Tam Williams) as moving statues. His choice of actors, while perhaps inadvertent, is nonetheless telling; by including Williams in this scene, Hall highlights the male body beneath Viola/Cesario's gray suit. The actors take on a variety of poses from antiquity, emulating Greek and Roman statuary in very much the same way as beefcake models posed decades earlier. To accentuate various points in the dialogue, the statues change their stances, and at one point, they even stop Sir Toby (Jason Baughman) from revealing his hiding place (see figure 4.18). The connection to beefcake, and the Citz's use of it, might be unintentional, both the display of bare male bodies correlates with the aesthetics of queer theater.

In actual performance, Williams' Viola/Cesario is closer to Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* than to the Citz's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Williams plays Viola/Cesario with earnestly and heartfelt emotion, but his performance also relies on traditional markers of masculinity. He wears a gray pinstriped suit with white shirt and tie (matching Sebastian's costume), but the night I saw Williams play Viola/Cesario perform, he had not shaved. This added to the homoerotic implication engendered by Orsino's attraction to Cesario. As Propeller's Feste (Tony Bell) sings a love song, Williams dresses Orsino

(Jack Tarlton), slowly buttoning his shirt, each touch lingering. Once clothed, Orsino lays his head in Cesario's lap, closes his eyes, and reaches for Cesario's hand. They listen to the remainder of the song in this way. After Cesario announces, "I am all the daughters of my father's house," Orsino embraces him. They kiss, and Orsino gives Cesario a ring, ostensibly to offer to Olivia, but in this production also implicitly as a sign of the affection of one man for another (see figure 4.19). Because Williams' appearance registers as male with razor stubble, a suit, and short hair, this exchange with Tarlton suggests a moment of gay contact, which follows the example of Cheek by Jowl's Ganymede and Orlando.

Dugald Bruce-Lockhart's Olivia, on the other hand, follows the Cleopatra model of the Citz'. Appearing as Petruchio in alternate performances of *Shrew*, Bruce-Lockhart is a physically impressive man – muscular, hairy, and square-jawed (see figure 4.7). However, as Olivia, he embraces the incongruity of looking like a butch man, but playing a woman (see figure 4.6). Opera length gloves cover Bruce-Lockhart's muscular biceps, and his chest hair is visible underneath the bodice of Olivia's black evening gown. His hair is cropped shorter than any of his cast mates, yet he wears earrings and eye shadow. As he moves about the stage in strapped gowns, his wide shoulders and back reveal a masculine physique. This provocative contradiction juxtaposes an unabashedly male body with deliberately selected markers of femininity in much the same way as Kent played Cleopatra, offering a clear queer aesthetic.

Propeller even further emphasizes homosexuality by staging Olivia and Sebastian's wedding scene as an *aubade*. It opens with Joe Flynn's Sebastian lying naked in bed, pondering aloud, "This is the air, that is the glorious sun, /This pearl she

gave me, I do feel't and see't" (IV.ii.1-2). As he works through this soliloquy, Flynn tosses and turn in bed, eventually standing with his waist covered by a bed-sheet (see Figure 4.20). The "pearl" Sebastian mentions is sexual, a fact underscored when Bruce-Lockhart's Olivia enters dressed in a red peignoir, emblematic of carnal knowledge, replacing the black mourning gown in which he has heretofore appeared. However, the nightgown makes Bruce-Lockhart appear even more male – any coverage provided by his gown and gloves are gone, replaced by his bare, broad back and thick, hairy thighs. As Bruce-Lockhart speaks, his muscular, hairy chest continues to show, his male nipples periodically slipping out in profile. As Flynn follows Bruce-Lockhart off-stage, the bed-sheet drops, thus revealing Flynn's bare bottom. In this instance, we see two undeniably male, presumably post-coital bodies. Without the cross-gender cast, the moment would register as the fulfillment of marriage rituals; however because two men play the scene, instead it invokes a queer disruption in normative practices. While the depiction of Sebastian's connection with Antonio lacked erotic charge, this scene between Sebastian and Olivia unreservedly displays male-male sexuality. Olivia's male body, feminine gestures and accoutrements, and involvement in explicitly sexual contact, coalesce to make this a queer performance.

Similarly, in Cheek by Jowl's *Twelfth Night*, Viola (Andrei Kuzitchev) performs gender in a manner that suggests self-awareness of a masculine body playing a female role. When Kuzitchev appears as Viola after the shipwreck, he wears a full length, cream-colored, slightly translucent dress that clearly reveals his male body – the audience clearly sees male nipples, not female breasts. When Kuzitchev speaks, he does not attempt to soften his tone or lift his pitch, so he sounds male even though his face and

hair is reminiscent of a young Mia Farrow. However, Kuzitchev's physical maleness does not overtake his characterization of either Viola or Cesario; rather, it seasons his performance, suggesting the ambiguity of Adrian Lester's Rosalind, but with tighter fitting clothes. At one point, Kuzitchev's Cesario forgets he is supposed to be a man, at first crossing his legs gracefully, then quickly spreading them wide. Paul Menzer notes that this "small comic turn riffed on the vertiginous layering of gender and produced an appreciative laughter."<sup>43</sup> The amalgamation of masculine and feminine in cross-gendered performance extends to Olivia (Alexei Dadonov) as well. Dadonov's clinging dress in the first act reveals a masculine chest and discernable crotch bulge – suggestive of the Citz's radical approach to cross-gender casting. Yet even with bulges and nipples, the actions played by Kuzitchev and company suggests a naturalistic ease of motion, similar to a dancer in a recital – the antithesis of the Globe's strategic costuming and stylized gliding.

This is not to suggest that Cheek by Jowl's use of discernibly male actors to play female roles was a casual association for the audience. When I saw the production in Chicago, as the house lights rose for intermission, I noticed two young women seated in front of me. The first leaned over to her friend and asked, "So, was he supposed to be a woman? It would make sense if a woman played it." Her friend replied, "Yeah, that's the point." And that really is the point – this production makes Shakespeare strange, alien, and queer. Or in a different context, as Menzer points out, "An all-male cast

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Menzer, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 25 (Spring 2007), 99.



speaking Russian immediately deranges the most familiar text.”<sup>44</sup> This production queers Shakespeare by presenting Viola and Olivia as women with male nipples and penis bulges, replacing forms of cross-gendered representation, such as the Globe’s historical imperative, with a practice that challenges traditional modes.

Cheek by Jowl’s signification of the actor’s body as a queer vehicle carries over to the promotional poster for *Twelfth Night* (see figure 4.21).<sup>45</sup> The black and white photograph features a close up of two sets of intertwined legs, lying horizontally across the frame, starting at mid-calf and ending near the upper thigh. Both pairs of legs are bare, save a smattering of black hair on one set and blond hair on the other, and they appear, from their musculature, to be male. Shadows frame the shot, suggesting perhaps that the nude legs connect with nude bodies, while the position of the legs, the darker set in front of the fair, implies an intimate, erotic relationship. Both sets of legs face the camera, but their position to one another is ambiguous – are they parallel or tip-to-toe? What is the relationship between the men whose legs we see? Are they making love? Engaged in sodomy? Spooning? Napping?

In displaying nude male legs, Donnellan alludes to the Citz’s use of beefcake as a theatrical aesthetic, and makes use of eroticized dismemberment, a technique popular in advertising. The use of body parts to sell commercial goods is a highly successful advertising technique; still, advertisers usually sever female body parts to sell their

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Cheek by Jowl made the image available as part of their press books wherever the show played. The Barbican Centre, Chicago Shakespeare, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the University of California also used the image for promotional posters in London, Chicago, New York, and Berkeley. As well, the Barbican used it as the program front piece for performances in London, where the show played in repertory with *The Changeling*. *The Changeling* was not all-male, so I have not discussed it.

products, focusing on erotic parts such as breasts, lips, buttocks, hair, and legs. Calvin Klein, of course, was among the first designers to use sexualized images of men in his underwear advertisements, often relying on beefcake poses. So, too Abercrombie and Fitch capitalizes on black and white photos of young, attractive, athletic males to sell its brand. These images frequently feature young men's bare butts, chests, arms, legs, often intertwined in homoerotic poses, and ostensibly meant for gay male consumption.<sup>46</sup> Thus severed from the whole, a body part becomes associated with a product, and the body from which it came becomes turned into an object.

In presenting dismembered male body parts, Cheek by Jowl brings the Citz' allusion to beefcake into fresh perspective. Susan Bordo points out, "gay photographers have created a rich, sensuous, and dramatic tradition which is unabashed in eroticizing the male body, male sensuousness, and male potency, including penises. But until recently, such representations have been kept largely in the closet."<sup>47</sup> In dismembering male body parts and presenting those parts on its advertisement, Cheek by Jowl turns the male erotic body into its signifier of the production. Adopting the Citz' inclusion of beefcake imagery in its productions and taking it further, Donnellan creates a connection between his *Twelfth Night* and post-millennial gay male icons such as those portrayed by Calvin Klein and Abercrombie and Fitch – the new beefcake.

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<sup>46</sup> In the publications where these practices have become standard, the readership tends to be gay men – in *Out*, *Genre*, and *Instinct*, images such as these are *de rigueur*. These periodicals are all aimed at gay men. And on the fetish of male body parts, *Out* even goes so far as to record and track the number of exposed male nipples that appear in every issue (even distinguishes between advertisement and editorial nipples.) The chart typically appears alongside letters to the editor.

<sup>47</sup> Susan Bordo, *The Male Body: A New Look at Men in Public and Private* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999), 179.

## Queering Shakespeare

By reflecting on the differences and commonalities in the three all-male productions of *Twelfth Night* I study in this chapter, I hope to have shown what makes all-male Shakespeare queer – at least in particular productions of the play. In conceptualizing a queer aesthetic of performing Shakespeare, cross-gendered performance is important, if not crucial. The productions quite often allude to aspects of lesbian and gay/queer culture, such as historical figures, cultural practices, and spaces of community. The display of male bodies is important, as is the explicit inclusion of sexuality – the instance of all-male performance can turn otherwise straight scenes queer, and highlight even further the homoeroticism implicit in Shakespeare’s texts. Finally, queer Shakespeare can reflect the local concerns of the lesbian and gay community – whether Gay Liberation, homophobic response to AIDS, or the drive for marriage equality. The political becomes artistic *vis-à-vis* Shakespeare.

The modern tradition of all-male Shakespeare, with queer roots in past productions by Glasgow’s Citizens’ Theatre and *Cheek by Jowl*, continues in the new millennium. A convention of early modern theater, cross-gender casting became an archaic practice shortly after William Davenant introduced women to the English public stage in 1656,<sup>48</sup> Christmas Panto relied on selected cross-gender casting for comic effect, but it was considered simply a vestige of times past. In the last forty years, however, there has been a resurgence of cross-gender cast productions of Shakespeare’s plays, and

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<sup>48</sup> That “entertainment” was *The Siege of Rhodes* and the actress was Mrs. Coleman, England’s first known professional actress. For more on Davenant’s Interregnum entertainments, which opened the stage to female performers, see Chad Thomas, “Negotiating the Interregnum: The Political Drama of Davenant and Tatham,” *1650-1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Period* 10 (2004): 225-244.

as I have argued in previous chapters, this practice has turned into a queer strategy in certain productions by the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl. Together, these companies helped develop an aesthetic of queer Shakespeare that influences all-male productions today, in the advent of a resurgence of cross-gender casting. These aesthetics can include allusions to spaces of gay community and queer practices, and a premium on explicit sexiness and an eroticized display of male bodies. However, this is not to suggest an irrevocable connection between cross-gendered performances of Shakespeare's plays and a conceptually queer Shakespeare. In this chapter, I have attempted to distinguish between three all-male productions of the same play in order to answer a question: why are some all-male productions queer and other not?

Queer Shakespeare encourages and expresses multivalent artistic, erotic, and gender experiences. The work of queer history, queer scholarship, and queer theater coalesce in queer Shakespearean performances that provide existential affirmation for society's sexual outliers. In this, its project is local, telling stories that might otherwise remain untold, while at the same time offering a critique of the undue social, political, and cultural influence sustained by heteronormative authority. In the 1970s, the Citizens' Theatre Company in Glasgow used cross-gender casting as one of many strategies to stage Shakespeare with references that alluded to aspects of gay male culture – radical drag, gay saunas, and beefcake magazines – demonstrating gender's performativity, quite often with a queer result. Cheek by Jowl, conversely, presented its acclaimed all-male *As You Like It* on stages around the world, utilizing similar referents, but deploying them in different ways. While the Citz's productions reflected Gay Liberation, the specter of AIDS and institutional homophobia dominated Cheek by Jowl's production. As a result,

*As You Like It* suggests a corrective to the heterosexist conventions of comedy, with characters that are lesbian, gay, on the down-low, and even bi-curious – sexuality and gender are simultaneously performative and porous, according to Cheek by Jowl. Just as queer theory imagines possibilities beyond normative frameworks of sex, gender, sexuality, and text, queer Shakespeare attempts to enact those possibilities.

Queer Shakespeare as a conceptual category can also suggest the instability of a familiar text. For example, the Citizens' Theatre presented an all-male *Hamlet*, but cut the role of the Ghost and moved the graveyard scene to the opening of the play, which featured young Hamlet masturbating and divided the Ghost's lines among the rest of the cast. As a result, Hamlet seemed to be responding to the voices in his own head, rather than following the instructions of his dead father. Thus, even with the fact of an all-male cast, a familiar text becomes something new. Similarly, Cheek by Jowl performed its all-male *Twelfth Night* in Russian with English subtitles illuminated on overhead screens. Shakespeare's text is the vehicle for the emotions, movements, objectives, and motivations that drive characters' actions. These actions are identifiable and remain accessible, yet the text is in Russian, so the words become unfamiliar, unstable to an English speaking audience.

The Globe's *Twelfth Night* seems to qualify as un-queer even though it utilizes strategies used to queer effect by other companies. This is perhaps surprising given Mark Rylance's experience at the Citizens' Theatre in the early 1980s; however, even though his performance of Olivia borrows from Citz's precedent, especially in his extremely physical approach the play's comedy, the production uses cross-dressing primarily to recreate a historical experience. The Citz' turned Shakespeare and Cleopatra into queer

icons through radical drag, but Rylance's Olivia creates history as a living representation of Queen Elizabeth – an entirely different kind of iconography. At the same time, the Globe's *Twelfth Night* places a premium on heteronormative social interactions, as evidenced by Rylance's dressing scene preparations and in the performances of Antonio and Sebastian as casual acquaintances. This contrasts sharply with Cheek by Jowl's presentation of Celia's love for Rosalind as romantic, and Le Beau and Jaques as recognizably gay. Liam Brennan's Orsino seems genuinely infatuated with Michael Brown's Cesario, but even that moment stops short of representing queer pleasure (in the form of a kiss).

In Propeller's production, however, Jack Tarlton's Orsino and Tam Williams' Cesario get the kiss denied to Brennan and Brown. In this, they follow the model of the Citz's Achilles and Patroclus, as well as Cheek by Jowl's Ganymede and Orlando. Williams' presentation of Viola/Cesario seems to indicate, as well, an awareness of previous performances; like Jonathan Kent's Cleopatra, Williams makes little effort to hide his masculine traits. He even seems to highlight his maleness by not shaving as Viola, but appearing as Lucentio in *Shrew* the night before as clean-shaven. Edward Hall also displays masculine bodies as part of his production strategy, which was an important component of Citz's style. In particular, the letter scene and the *aubade* between Joe Flynn's Sebastian and Dugald Bruce-Lockhart's Olivia highlight the actors' physical presence; the revelation of Flynn's lovely ass corresponds with the climax of the scene, and Bruce-Lockhart's arms and chest fairly burst out of his tiny, red negligee. For Propeller, the appropriation of strategies used for queer results by previous companies might not be intentional, but it is nonetheless explicit. However, given the sexless,

passionless exchanges between Sebastian and Antonio, Propeller's production seems almost caught between queer and not – informed by male-male erotic desire, but also disavowing explicit textual and performative instances of male-male eroticism. Thus, Propeller might be understood as unintentionally queer: informed by the Citz' and Cheek by Jowl's production strategies turned queer aesthetics, but lacking in political intentionality (a queer agenda).

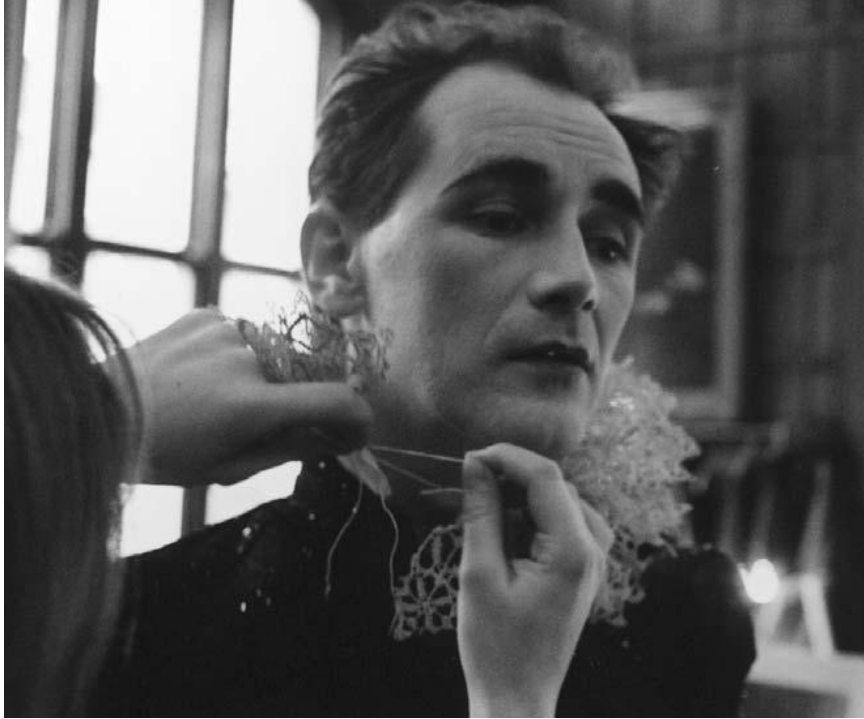
Finally, Cheek by Jowl's production of *Twelfth Night*, perhaps not surprisingly, performs Shakespeare queer. In the fashion of its forebear *As You Like It*, this production disrupts the comic resolution of heteronormativity while destabilizing gender identity. Lester and Coates stepped to the left, Andrei Kuzitchev, assuming the role of Viola, giggles, and skips off-stage; these actions signify gender's ability to be crossed and performed. The androgyny of the actors seems, as well, to have precedence in Kent's Cleopatra, even if Cheek by Jowl lacks the Citz' flamboyance. Declan Donnellan also follows queer antecedents by presenting a multiplicity of sexual object choices – effectively deemphasizing normativity by presenting a plurality of possibilities. In its resolution, this *Twelfth Night* suggests a corrective to the heterosexist conventions of comedy as a genre. While *As You Like It*'s resolution might have left Celia unfulfilled, this production tries to show that it doesn't take a *deus ex machina* to bring together otherwise irreconcilable characters – sometimes they find their way together of their own accord.

Shakespearean drama has the ability to make the excluded included, which is why the idea of queering Shakespeare is so potent. Performed Shakespeare has the ability to build community, as evidenced in various instances of local Shakespearean appropriation.

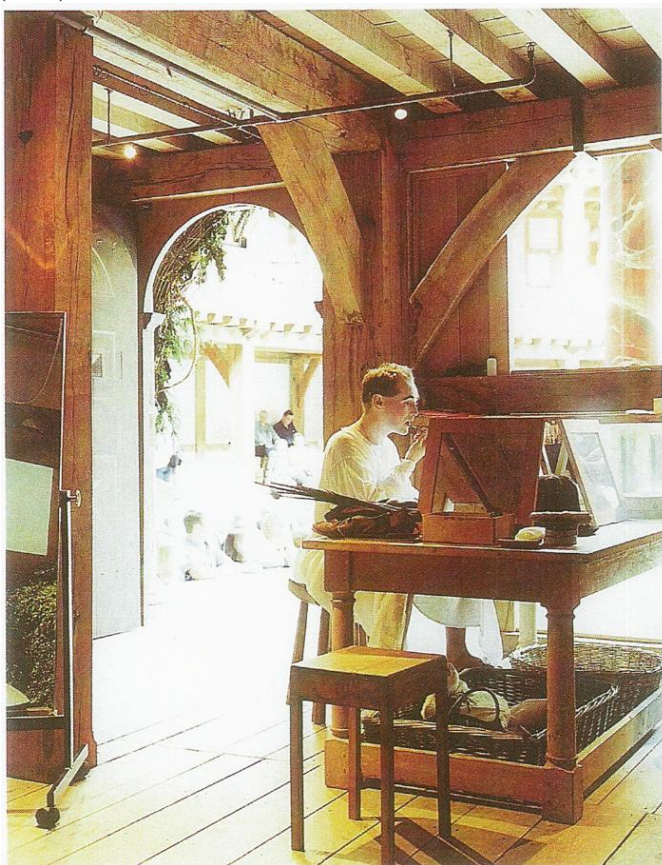
Other groups use Shakespeare to create a sense of existential affirmation; his plays likewise offer this opportunity to lesbians and gay men. Performing queer Shakespeare can open previously unimaginable possibilities, a world where comic resolutions include the bringing together of same-sex couples. Queer Shakespeare offers lesbian and gay audience members the opportunity to feel as if they belong, and as if their desires are as important as the desire of their straight counterparts. It can make those living outside of “normal” feel as if they nonetheless have a history and a community.

Finally, although it is not necessary for queering Shakespeare, cross-gender cast performance becomes an important aesthetic of performing Shakespeare queer. All-male Shakespeare has the potential to actualize the historical, sometimes implicit queerness in the plays. It takes an antiquated tradition, and makes it fresh, relevant, and exciting; and the fact of its historical precedent gives it a purpose that cross-gendered productions of plays by other authors might not allow. However, the practice can also be de-fanged by companies that disavow queer performance, refuted by the claim of historical authority, excused as historical reenactment. However, with the prospect of cultural hijacking, the prospect of queer all-male Shakespeare remains exhilarating and quite often fulfilling – even if only in flashes of identification.





**Figure 4.1** Mark Rylance prepares to play Olivia. The Globe's *Twelfth Night* on tour in Ann Arbor (2003).



**4.2** The Tiring House. Rylance in *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (2002).

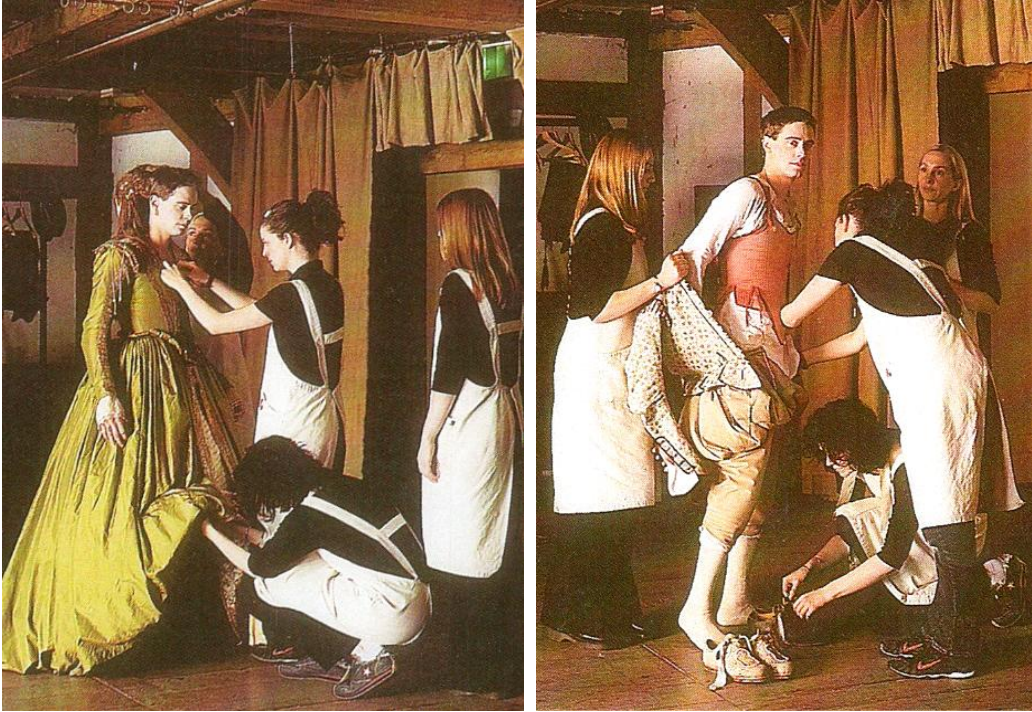


4.3 The Tiring House. Peter Shorey (left) and Rylance (right) prepping for performance in *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (2002).



Figure 4.4 The Tiring House. Rylance in *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (2002).





**Figure 4.5** The Tiring House. Michael Brown prepares to play Viola (left) and Cesario (right) in *Twelfth Night* at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre (2002).



**Figure 4.6** A vision of butch femininity. Olivia (Dugald Bruce-Lockhart) and Cesario (Tam Williams) in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



**Figure 4.7** Butch, revisited. Petruchio (Dugald Bruce-Lockhart) with Katherine (Simon Scardifield) in Propeller's *Taming of the Shrew* (2006).



**Figure 4.8** Dude looks like a lady. Maria (Chris Myles), Sir Toby (Jason Baughman), and Feste (Tony Bell) in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).





Figure 4.9 The opening sequence. Feste (Bell) plays the violin in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



Figure 4.10 "What country, friends, is this?" Viola (Tam Williams) washed up on the shores of Illyria in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



**Figure 4.11** Identical twins. Tam Williams and Joe Flynn as Viola and Sebastian in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



Figure 4.12 Feste as an old queen. Evgeny Pisarev is Cheek by Jowl's *Twelfth Night* (2003).





**Figure 4.13** Feste sings. Feste (Pisarev) sits on Orsino's lap (Vladimir Vdovichenkov) in *Cheek by Jowl's Twelfth Night* (2003).





Figure 4.14 Viola/Cesario. Brown as Viola (left) and as Cesario (right) in the Globe's *Twelfth Night* (2002).



Figure 4.15 Olivia as icon. Right: Rylance as Olivia as Elizabeth I in the Globe's *Twelfth Night* (2002). Left: The "Sieve Portrait" of Elizabeth I (circa 1583).



Figure 4.16 A kiss - almost. Orsino (Liam Brennan, left) and Cesario (Brown, right) in the Globe's *Twelfth Night* (2002).



Figure 4.17 Cesario/Viola. Williams in a publicity photo and a poster for Propeller's *Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic (2006).





**Figure 4.18** Male bodies as objects of desire. Sir Toby (Baughman) surrounded by shirtless statues (Alasdair Craig in the back, Tam Williams and Dominic Tighe in the front) in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



**Figure 4.19** Pledging his love? Orsino (Jack Tarlton) gives his ring to Cesario (Williams) after they share a kiss in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



Figure 4.20 The morning after. Flynn's body on display as Sebastian in Propeller's *Twelfth Night* (2006).



Figure 4.21 Legs dismembered. The photo *Cheek* by Jowl featured on *Twelfth Night*'s promotional posters and in programs (2003).

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