UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

PÓS-GRADUÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

BODY POLITICS BETWEEN SUBLIMATION AND SUBVERSION: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY ALL MALE PERFORMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S *AS YOU LIKE IT*

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Tese submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina em cumprimento parcial dos requisitos para obtenção do grau de

DOUTOR EM LETRAS

FLORIANÓPOLIS

Fevereiro 2005

Esta tese de Stephan Arnulf Baumgärtel, intitulada "Body Politics Between Sublimation and Subversion: Critical Perspectives on Twentieth-Century All-Male Performances Of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*", foi julgada adequada e aprovada em sua forma final, pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, para fins de obtenção do grau de

DOUTOR EM LETRAS

Área de concentração: Inglês e Literatura Correspondente
Opção: Literatura de Língua Inglesa

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Florianópolis, 25.02.2005

To my parents Luisa and Klaus, thankful of all transformations we went through together, and to my son Tadeu, whose cheeky laughter teaches me essential insights in the pleasures and dangers of transgressive reinscriptions.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of many people. I want to acknowledge the support of CNPq, without whose scholarship it would have been impossible to carry out this research, both here in Brazil and abroad.

I want to thank my supervisor Dr. José Roberto O'Shea, whose professional experience, integrity and confidence in my work were of fundamental importance for my ability to bring this dissertation to a satisfactory conclusion.

My thanks go to Prof. Dr. Ina Schabert and Dr. Ingeborg Boltz at the Shakespeare Institute Munich, where I was able to pursue original research. They not only invited me to stay at this institution during my split PhD, but also offered me their institutional resources and experience in a most generous way.

To Werner Eggenhofer, Ernst Konarek, Hans Hirschmüller, and Franziska Koetz for their willingness to be interviewed by me.

To Lioba Winterhalder, who most kindly gave me access to her private archive.

To Jim Shaw from the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford-upon-Avon, the staff from the Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum in London, and the production team of Watermill Productions at Newbury/ West Berkshire for their prompt help with resources and experience.

To my friends Clemens and Sabine Albrecht, Rashid al-Taliq, and Eric Fortier, for encouragement, pertinent and constructive criticism, and the pleasures of long, meandering conversations.

And most of all to Adriana Barreto, who set me on this trail in the first place. Her enthusiasm and her playfulness have left their marks in me and this work.

ABSTRACT

BODY POLITICS BETWEEN SUBLIMATION AND SUBVERSION:
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY ALL-MALE
PERFORMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S *AS YOU LIKE IT*.

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In face of the critical literature about the transvestite actor on the Elizabethan stage, this dissertation analyses and discusses the supposed transgressive effect of the cross-cast and cross-dressed male actor on the late twentieth-century Shakespearean stage. It asks in what theatrical ways and to what socio-political ends the male cross-cast actor is used in four all-male productions of *As You Like It* that range from 1967 to 1994. The time span in question is marked by a cultural turn usually discussed as a change from modern to postmodern cultural structures. Therefore, this research contextualises its performance analyses by an analysis of the changing gender concepts throughout this period of time. It affirms such change as one moving from a hegemonically unified and naturalising concept through a polymorphous and depoliticised one to a gender concept that acknowledges the category's unstability and historical contingency, while highlighting the political pressures that work on this contingency. This change affects the erotic and political significations of the transvestite actor as to dissolve him/her as a symbol of sublime totality and reconstruct her/him as a tool to highlight and dislocate fixed power positions. The four performance analyses situate the productions within this cultural dynamics, highlighting how they resonate

within or intervene into their respective social contexts. To do so, the construction of the transvestite body on stage is analysed from a theatrical, erotic and socio-political point of view.

Number of words: 75418

Number of pages: 273

Resumo

Tomando como ponto de partida a literatura crítica sobre o ator travestido no teatro elisabetano, esta tese analisa e discute o suposto efeito transgressivo do ator travestido no palco shakespeareano do século XX. Indaga em que formas teatrais e para quais fins se usa o ator travestido em quatro montagens de *As You Like It* que trabalham com elenco masculino. O período em questão está marcado por uma virada cultural que se costuma delinear como uma virada de estruturas culturais modernas para pós-modernas. Portanto, esta pesquisa contextualiza as análises de montagem através de uma análise das mudanças nas concepções de gênero durante o período em questão. Afirma que essas mudanças passam de um conceito hegemonicamente unificada e naturalizado por um conceito polimorfo e depolitizado, chegando a um conceito instável, historicamente circunscrito que focaliza as pressões políticas que trabalham para sua própria construção. Essa mudanças afetam as significações eróticas e políticas do ator travestido de tal forma que dissolvem esta figura como símbolo de uma sublime totalidade e o reconstroem como uma ferramenta para destacar e deslocar posições fixas de poder social. As quatro análises de montagem situam as produções dentro dessa dinâmica cultural, realçando como elas ressoam dentro ou intervêm nos seus respectivos contextos sociais. Para fazer isso, é abordada a construção do corpo travestido no palco de um ponto de vista teatral, erótico e sócio-político.

Número de palávras: 75418

Número de páginas: 273

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

This dissertation is the result of my ambivalent fascination with the cross-dressed body and the cross-dresser on stage. The fascination concerns the theatrically and erotically elusive stage body, its blurring of socially established gender categories and bourgeois morality. It is also inspired by the capacity on part of the actors to question the boundaries of their own desires and tease the audience to do the same. For in the transvestite figure on stage we encounter not only an ambiguous sign that challenges a rigid sign system, but also a human being willing to manipulate that sign system and the emotional and moral regulations it upholds. This challenge involves acts of personal exposure and represents a call for recognition of marginalised feelings and ways of life – although I know from my own experience that the stage is also a protected space, and exposure takes place within fairly regulated and conventionalised communication patterns between audience and actors.

This fascination with the dramatic and emotional energy of a performance that blurs on stage the boundaries between fictitious character and real person is not limited to contents of gender or sexuality. It is there whenever I feel that the actor in her/his performance blurs the boundaries of her/his social and theatrical existence. Consequently, the dramatic energy and power of performance is seriously diminished when I perceive cross-cast acting as simply a highly skilled technical performance. Admiration for superb histrionic technique is less thrilling than for the courageous blurring of boundaries that define personal and social identities, hence my interest in verifying to what extent the cross-dressed actor on the Shakespearean stage works as an intervention into social norms, and not just as a symbolic element that teases the stability of rational sign systems.

A certain scepticism comes in at this point which produces the ambivalence concerning the cross-dressed actor as a transgressive force. It is motivated by my understanding of some principles and tensions in contemporary Western culture, most of all the tendency towards an alleged individualization of identity formations that allows the blurring of traditional gender boundaries in the social sphere. The phenomenon can be found, for instance, in advertisement campaigns like the one by Calvin Klein for the brand's underwear and perfumes, but most of all in the phenomenon labelled 'metrosexuality', which is less a sexual than a cultural phenomenon in which attributes of a gay life style are used by heterosexual men to produce a more androgynous decoration for a fundamentally traditional straight masculinity.[1] This decorative gender blending affects the so called transgressive effect of the male cross-dressed actor on stage, since actors and production must somehow distance their intentions from such consumerist cross-gender practices, if they want to obtain a transgressive effect.

Thus, among other objectives, this dissertation is meant as a case study in the actor's capacity to produce cultural anxiety within the contemporary cultural context of

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[1] According to www.wordspy.com, the term was first coined by Mark Simpson in the article, "Here come the Mirror Men" in *The Independent* on 15 Nov 1994. In his article, Simpson claims that the responsibility for the creation of this recent trend belongs to men's style press. The term's meaning reveals its profound connection with the public relation departments of the fashion and cosmetics industry. Wordspy.com, for instance, describes the etymology of the term: "Why 'metrosexual'? The *metro-* (city) prefix indicates this man's purely urban lifestyle, while the *-sexual* suffix comes from "homosexual," meaning that this man, although he is usually straight, embodies the heightened aesthetic sense often associated with certain types of gay men." The Swiss newspaper *Basler Zeitung*, in its Online Edition www.baz.ch (21 Jul 2003) spells out a similar definition: *Der Metrosexuelle lebt seine weibliche Seite aus, pflegt sich mit teuren Produkten und sieht gut dabei aus. Seine sexuellen Präferenzen stehen jedoch ausser Frage: Er will Frauen. Schwul leben, aber nicht schwul sein, lautet die Devise*. [The metrosexual acts out his feminine side. He takes care of his body with expensive products and looks good in doing so. But his sexual preferences cannot be doubted: he wants women. To live gay, but not to be gay, that's the motto.] The frequently cited icon of metrosexuals in men's magazines is the British football player David Beckham. He is a good example of the ultimately conservative function of the term in merely describing how gay style can adorn a straight man who still proves his value in a "tough" and traditional manner and environment – very similar to Renaissance notions that "beauty adorns virtue" (Kuchta). All in all, the phenomenon of metrosexuality shows that the alleged individualization of identity formations in gender terms follows certain socio-economic regulations (see 2.2.2).

highly industrialised Western societies such as Germany and England, especially in theatrical productions that are mainly put on stage within a commercial, mainstream theatre. To do so, I analyse and test the fascinating critical and theoretical work on the transgressive potential of all-male productions of Shakespeare's drama, which draws mainly on the Elizabethan boy-actor's possible effects, vis-à-vis contemporary theatrical productions. Furthermore, I want to find out which aesthetic and socio-political choices and regulations seem decisive, and why this is the case (or not).

The decision to limit my analysis of same-sex cast theatricality on the twentieth-century Shakespearean stage to all-male productions is based on mainly three reasons: Firstly, for comparative reasons, I wanted to concentrate on one play, and apparently no all-female *As You Like It* has been staged on what can be called a mainstream stage, aimed at a mainstream audience.[2] Such focus gives me the chance to compare the construction and signification of certain key scenes, for instance the final wedding scene in *As You Like It*, which in turn allows me to draw comparative conclusions on the theatrical principles that structured each production. Secondly, the limitation of the research to all-male productions of a single play allows to compare the productions with a consistent set of analytical tools. Under these homogenous conditions, changes in the usage of the male-to-female transvestite actor can get aligned less ambiguously to the production's conception of the playtext's significance. This makes it easier to establish a relation between the changing significance of the male-to-female transvestite actor, i.e., its reception as expressed in press reviews, and cultural patterns located in the varying historical contexts of reception. The performance analyses, then, do not stand as isolated critical interpretations of single theatrical shows, but together contribute to a

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[2] Solomon mentions a fringe all-female production of the play which she judges as a downright failure, mainly due to weak acting, but also to the affirmative, conventional treatment of the gender issue in the production (32, note 43).

critical analysis of how a cultural dynamics in Western society affects and is reflected in the chosen all-male productions. And thirdly, it seems possible (and necessary) to do justice to the mutual dependance of “male” and “female” as gender markers in a dichotomous gender system by referring in an exemplary way to significant observations in regard to all-female productions, especially as far as the theatrical construction of the transvestite body on stage, the production strategies and achieved effects, are concerned. Therefore, I shall refer throughout the dissertation to some, mainly theatrical, aspects in all-female productions, mainly productions of the Globe Theatre London in 2003 and 2004, but also one German production of *Twelfth Night* in Berlin in 1991.[3] In these exemplary comparative comments, I discuss to what extent my hypotheses and conclusions regarding the theatrical and erotic presence of the staged body and its socio-political effects might operate in regard to all-female productions as well.

The 1990s saw the publishing of a number of articles and books that, in general, considered the cross-dresser a symbolically and politically subversive figure.[4] They established him/her, among others, as the emblematic unstable representation of the symbolic order’s condition of possibility (Garber), or endowed drag with a subversive power in the field of identity politics (Butler), which threatens to delegitimise the established gender system. As the living paradigm of hybridisation and unstability at the root of supposedly stable gender orders, s/he served as a signifier that opened up a

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[3] For the 2003 "Regime Change" season, the Globe's artistic director Mark Rylance devised two all-female productions at the London Globe: 1. *Richard III*, Dir. Kathryn Hunter, herself in the title role. 2. *The Taming of the Shrew*, Dir. Barry Kyle. Within the 2004 "Star-Crossed Lovers" season, the Shakespeare's Globe produced *Much Ado About Nothing*, Dir. Tamara Harvey. Martin Meltke staged an all-female *Twelfth Night* at the Gorki Theatre in Berlin in 1992.

[4] Within this dissertation, I consider an element to be subversive of a hegemonic context whenever it either a) liberates a hitherto unperceived, repressed reality to the effect that this liberation threatens the personal or social hegemonic reality (and possibly forces it to acknowledge and incorporate the elements of this formerly repressed reality, which brings the subversive force to an end) or b) reveals the emotional

playful field of new subject positions and politically subversive pleasures, a paradigmatic *agent provocateur* and a hero of subversive gender politics. On the other hand, Laurence Senelick, in his historically well-informed formal analysis of drag and the transvestite stage, warns against an overestimation of the theatrical cross-dressed actor's capacity to reach out into the lived reality of the audience and to put into crisis the socially established matrix of gender relations: "Rather than confounding categories it [the cross-dressed actor] invents new ones, providing fresh matter for desire, and releases the spectator's imagination and libido by an ever-changing kaleidoscope of gender" (12); Senelick concludes that in this release the "transvestite in performance rarely displaces dichotomous systems of sex and gender" (12).[5] In its scepticism towards the political effectiveness of theatrical art, Senelick's analysis, published in 2000, marks the end of an empowering decade for theatrical cross-dressers in socio-political terms. Does this mean they can declare "mission accomplished"? I will turn to this question again in the conclusion.

The 1990s also produced an interesting phenomenon concerning a growing acceptance of the cross-dressed actor on the theatrical stage, namely the remarkable revival of all-male Shakespeare performances. The London New Globe Theatre regularly stages all-male productions; Watermill Productions, a small but highly successful theatre from Newbury, Wessex, together with Edward Hall's company Propeller, also produces all-male Shakespeare performances on a regular basis. In

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and social price of such hegemonic repressions to such effect that the repressive hegemonic mechanism loses its purported "naturalness" and becomes historically specific, open to further criticism.

[5] For Senelick the androgynous or hermaphrodite connotation of the cross-dressed actor on stage does not imply a politically destabilizing effect, since s/he "may seem androgynous, but is not an androgyne" (12). Thus, Senelick limits the cross-dressed actor's playful rearrangements of gender to the realm of imagination only, since it offers "a polymorphism more desirable than attainable" (10). Contrary to Senelick, defenders of the cross-dressers' political relevance argue that a recognition of these private desires in audience members may spawn political effects. This discussion lies at the heart of accusations levelled against theatrical cross-dressing as neglecting the emotional pain involved in cross-dressing in

Germany, the company "Shakespeare und Partner", led among others by veteran Norbert Kentrup, an actor/director who has worked with Shakespeare's drama and the tradition of popular theatre for over thirty years now,[6] tries to bring all-male performances of Shakespeare's plays to a wider audience. The annual Shakespeare festival in Neuss/Germany[7] tries to present all-male Shakespeare productions – and sometimes all-female productions as well – from countries all over the world. In the light of such a flux, all-male performances of Shakespeare's drama using adult casts are no longer received as examples of a fringe theater. Instead, as I expect to demonstrate, they have become part of the cultural mainstream.

The possible reasons for this revived and now culturally accepted interest in all-male performances of Shakespeare's drama inform the critical objective of this dissertation, which is to investigate the general topic of gender representations in all-male performances of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. This dissertation not only explores the functions and effects of cross-casting and cross-dressing in all-male productions of the aforementioned playtext, but ultimately tests the capacity of all-male casting in Shakespeare's drama in performance to produce socially and psychically transgressive effects on the late twentieth-century stage. In what follows, I shall use this introduction to clarify the terms and conceptual framework as concerns the phenomenon of the transvestite actor on the Shakespearean stage and to point at changing attitudes towards this figure. To that end, I start with an investigation of historical attitudes towards

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lived reality, namely by people who cannot clearly identify themselves with one gender only, or who want to identify physically with the body of the other sex.

[6] Kentrup was also the first and so far only German actor to take up a part in a Shakespeare play on the London New Globe Stage, playing Shylock in Richard Olivier's production of *The Merchant of Venice* in 1998. Interestingly enough, he remarked that the director was not very interested in tapping into his long experience with Shakespeare in a popular tradition (see Schorman 322).

[7] Neuss is located in the region of the Lower Rhine near Düsseldorf. It is so far the only German city that owns a modern replica of the historical Globe Theatre. The theatre is predominantly used to bring Shakespeare's plays on stage during the Festival Season in summer. Companies from all over Europe and sometimes from overseas present their ways of dealing with Shakespeare's drama.

Elizabethan boy actors on stage, followed by a critical history of transvestism on the Shakespearean stage. The conjunction of both developments makes clear that the often mentioned transgressive effect of all-male casting cannot be taken for granted when it comes to Shakespeare's drama. Rather, it is in need of historic qualification. For it is not any inherent quality of the attitude (or practice) itself that produces a transgressive effect. As a cultural effect, transgression first of all depends on the cultural norms in power. Such norms define what is accepted, constituting, by contrast, the renegated, the abjected. In this context, Stallybrass and White speak of transgression as the process through which "the low troubles the high" (5), but this "low" has been constructed as such by those forces that install the respective high. As long as a binary, psychically fixed gender system is a marker for socially acceptable identities, the cross-cast and cross-dressed figure – especially when inserted in a narrative that harmonises social and psychic conflicts in marriage –challenges these social norms. By producing fascination in the audience for such cross-cast and cross-dressed figures, the Shakespearean stage may intervene in the binary norms in power and assert non-binary identities as representations of an acceptable identity.[8] In so far as the high constructs the low as its devalued other, a transgressive strategy would depend on a production's ability to construct the non-binary identity not as the other of a binary structured one, but both as part of a continuum. That's one reason why the cross-dressed actors' bodies on the Shakespearean stage have been stripped off their hybrid potential, as we shall see, whenever directors wanted to accommodate this figure within unified social norms and the high aesthetics they lay out.

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[8] Structurally, there are similarities with cross-cultural figures such as Muslim women living in Western societies who for different reasons use a head scarf. The image of these women challenges Western notions of equality and tolerance as fundamental cultural norms.

The transvestite body as a source of cultural and political trouble first appeared on the English stage in opposition to symbolic presuppositions of Puritan epistemology, morality, and body politics.[9] Phyllis Rackin, for example, has shown how cross-dressing in the narratives of various comedies is treated with strong anxiety by late Elizabethan and early Stuart plays such as Ben Jonson's city comedies, whereas early Elizabethan comedies such as *Galathea* did not bother much about gender ambiguities and even allowed sex changes in their characters within their narrratives. For Rackin this shift reflects the changing socio-economic context from feudal Elizabethan culture to the Puritan, bourgeois culture of the London merchant class. Indeed, the antitheatricalists of Early Modern England do not count among the nobility, but among the Puritans, whose values and economic activities were about to form modern, bourgeois Europe.[10] In the late Elizabethan context, Puritans voiced their concerns about social and economic stability through a fixation on gender relations. The conclusions of Rackin's literary criticism are in line with Foucault's or Laqueur's insight that the early seventeenth century marks the beginning of a new attitude towards sex and sexuality, namely the transformation of a one-sex into a two-sex model of human identity. It is the status of a cross-dressed Renaissance theater as a site of social and moral change that also informs Jean Howard's affirmation that "theater […] form[s] part of the cultural apparatus for policing gender boundaries […] and as a site for their further disturbance. […] Theater [was] in some sense an agent of cultural transformation, helping to create new subject positions and gender relations for men and women" (29-30).

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[9] I am aware that not all Elizabethan and Jacobean anti-theatricalists were Puritans in a self-avowed sense. But the notions of religious and moral arguments and economic interest underlying their critique confirm their filiation with the Puritan worldview (see also Barish and Levine).

[10] On the relation between Puritanism and the development of modern bourgeois thought, see of course Max Weber's *Zur Ethik des Protestantismus*.

Tracey Sedinger has offered a philosophically informed analysis of how the cross-dressed body gains subversive socio-political effects, especially in the context of the early modern anti-theatrical thought and its ideal of fixed identity.[11] This anti-theatricality and the concomitant ideal of identity seems to be based on Deuteronomy 22:5, according to which God orders that men and women should not wear clothes belonging to the other sex. For the anti-theatrical bourgeois, Deuteronomy 22:5 corroborates the religious dogma that God has created two biological sexes, each with an essence, a specific nature that defined who each individual was, and how he or she should behave.[12] From such point of view, outer signs like clothes, haircut, forms of speaking and behaviour were given to people in order to reflect and enforce this godgiven essence.[13] The "dangers" of the theatre, and especially cross-dressed theatre, lie in the capacity to modify and pervert the relation of human beings to this essential being that God has given to them. The "infection" spread by the theatre is the possibility of taking pleasure in a human existence that knows of no fixed being and self. It means to turn away from what Puritans saw as the divine truth of an eternal order and to give room to self-fashioning concepts of personality, where being is a matter of appearance. That is why theatre represents heretic idolatry. [14]

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[11] Sedinger criticises Rackin's reading of the tranvestite body on stage as an unduly harmonizing one in which the cross-dressed actor on stage is a rather unproblematic figure. However, Rackin's contention is that this applies only to the early Elizabethan Period.

[12] It remains a bit of a mystery (or rather an example of willful interpretation) that these texts claiming that men should not wear dresses overlook Deuteronomy 22:30, where God orders that a man shall not "discover his father's skirt" (King James Version). Men wearing skirts are mentioned at least a dozen times in the Old Testament. In other words, in the days of the Old Testament clothes were no distinctive category to define gender.

[13] It is necessary to understand that in Puritan thought "essence" means a quality inside an individual. It includes social rank, but is not restricted to it, as in medieval religious essentialism, where the essence of a human being is defined by his or her social position within a divine cosmos.

[14] I am aware of the positive connotations which self-fashioning could acquire within Renaissance philosophy, namely as the divinely ordained protean personality. Anti-theatricalists did not share them (see Barish 106-115). Writers such as Stephen Gosson, William Rankins, John Rainolds, Phillip Stubbes and William Prynne argued repeatedly against the theatre as a place of illusion and falsity, of which gender confusion is only one instance. Although opposition to theatricality is as old as Plato's *Republic*, it is important for the argument of this dissertation that it gained a specific momentum within the social and

Even if religiously founded morality is the most important issue, it is clear that the theatre is devalued by the London merchant class on socio-economic grounds as well. Jonas Barish writes that

> [t]he theatre symbolized, or was taken to symbolize, a whole complex of attitudes anathema to the sober burgesses from whose ranks the London magistrates were elected, and whose views weighted heavily on the pulpits of the town. The theater stood for pleasure, for idleness, for the rejection of hard work and thrift as the roads to salvation. […] It created disorders. It bred a class of upstart vagabonds who strutted the town in finery it was illegal for them to wear, and it added one more form of conspicuous consumption to the insolence of an already overprivileged aristocracy. It seemed to embody everything wrong with the social order. (114)

This variety of morally and socially unsettling theatrical effects was often referred to by anti-theatricalists as "sodomy". Within the Elizabethan context, then, this term should not be read primarily as a description of homosexual practice. In fact, it denominated the most varied forms of deviant behaviour, from illicit heterosexual and homosexual practices to witchcraft, atheism, or indulging in Catholic idolatry (Sedinger, 75-7). What these activities have in common is to exist outside the Puritan world view. Their continuous existence and public representation within the Puritan social world challenges this world's founding parameters.[15] Hence, Sedinger drawing on the conceptual parallels between sodomy and the cross-cast actor uses Jonathan Goldberg's interpretation of sodomy to describe the cross-dressed boy-actor on stage as "a site that produces a deontologizing effect" (76).

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economic conditions of Early Modern England. This is in line with Barish's conclusion that the anti-theatrical prejudice seems to be nourished by deep psychic forces that extend over historical times. He writes, "it belongs […] to a conservative ethical emphasis in which the key terms are those of order, stability, constancy, and integrity, as against a more existentialist emphasis that prizes growth, process, exploration, flexibility, variety and versatility of response. In one case we have an ideal of stasis, in the other an ideal of movement, in one case an ideal of rectitude, in the other an ideal of plenitude" (117). Currently, these two ideals are being renegotiated.

[15] "Sodomy, as a crime, is itself about the limits of representation, specifically insofar as representations seduce their beholders to behaviours that a Protestant iconoclastic politics would deem illicit" (Goldberg 76).

For many, this uncertain status of the cross-dressed actor may have constituted a source of legitimate satisfaction. For Puritans, it rather revealed a horrendous pleasure, for in so far as "crossdressing mobilises a libidinal investment in the play (of erotic difference) not reducible to the real sex of the boy-actor" (Goldberg 66), it produces pleasure in a polymorphous, not object-based sexuality and confounds a moral (and to a certain extent political) imperative that each individual is endowed with a uniform, stable identity and should outwardly be what he or she is inwardly.[16]

It comes to no surprise that the profound economic change from feudal to modern ways of production, whose economic forces uproot people against their will, produces anxieties about social and psychic instabilities. Linking Levine's, Sedinger's and Rackin's articles, we can conclude that the disruptive power of the Elizabethan cross-dressed theatre is connected with a context in which the ideal of a stable, sovereign self is still hegemonic, albeit under attack, and whose stability and sovereignty depend on clear gender boundaries. Within Puritan discourse,[17] the modern, scientific frame of biology as destiny (Laqueur) is introduced through a religious

[16] In a similar line goes Michael Shapiro's comment on Lisa Jardine's contention that ultimately the boy-actor's body serves as object of desire and cause of sexual excitement. "Lisa Jardine overstates the case, I believe, in arguing that homoerotic attraction was the primary source of the appeal of boy actresses [sic], in or out of male disguise. Nonetheless, the more skillful the female impersonation in offering a theatrical construction of a social construction of femininity, the more likely that the culture's essentialised notions of maleness were called into question" (39). For Levine, "the fear of effeminization which came to dominate anti-theatrical tracts disguised a profound conflict about the nature of the self […][This fear] is no longer a question of violating scriptural injunctions, but an unmanageable anxiety that there is no such thing as a masculine self" (136). Even if, as Levine purports, the anti-theatricalists' arguments on morality express their authors' personal anxieties, I do not concur with her that they constitute merely a "personal symptomatology" and not a "cultural critique". These positions may not add up to a *coherent* cultural critique, but they stand for a cultural symptom, namely that the traditional contexts to stabilise masculinity were no longer available and that no new social hegemonic contexts had been established. In this context, the defence of the masculine self as an ideal of stability, handed over to mere logical argumentation, falls prey to logic's self-destructive consequences.

[17] In this dissertation, I understand by discourse a coherent set of historic and transindividual (spoken, written and behavioural) regulatory statements which in turn both generate and restrict the social validity and legitimacy of individual statements. Although a discourse can be structurally perceived as organised towards coherence, this coherence is shaped by and out of contradictions, significant omissions and repressive impulses as regards the respective object of affirmation. Hence, a discourse is marked by tendencies both for unity and disunity. Therefore, although a discourse provides the conceptual horizon

terminology compatible with the culture of the times. As such, it substituted gender based on social rank, which had its own regulations and discoursive coherences.[18] When the individual is catalogued in such a way that everything inside must get its proper and unmistaken name, a signifier that installs and insists on the unnamability of its signified represents the utmost transgression. What Foucault contends throughout the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* for the bourgeois interest in sexuality, namely that its polymorphous impulses attain the status of truth and liberation only within the positivist taxonomy of bourgeois repression, also goes for the cross-dressed actor: s/he constitutes a sign of revulsion and promised plenitude only within the founding frame of coherent interiority (be it masculine or feminine). With hindsight, we can detect in the anti-theatricalists' rage the incipient bourgeois subjectivity, epistemology, morality and two-sex gender system. The methodological implication of this insight is to read contemporary theatrical production against the background of the current cultural shift form modernity to late modernity and postmodernity.

The transformative power of the transvestite figure on stage within modern concepts of identity resides in the dialectical presence of two effects: anxiety and pleasure, a manifest revulsion and a lurking promise. Anxiety and revulsion bring into relief existing limits of morality, whereas the promise of utopian pleasure lures the spectator into so far unexperienced states of existence. Here, it will be important to keep in mind two different meanings of transgression, a more political and a more existential one. As I have mentioned, Stallybrass and White apply a notion of transgressiveness that focuses on the political impact when a marginalised "low" troubles the hegemonic "high". Positively spoken, as a proxy for the audience, the cross-cast and cross-dressed

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within which individuals can make legitimate statements on the respective subject matter, it does not fully control individual statements and their effects.

actors allow bourgeois spectators "to get in touch with the fields of desire which [they] denied [themselves] as the price paid for [their] political power" (201), and the non-bourgeois spectators at the socio-erotic margins to find hope in the possibility to voice their desires and press for recognition and cultural changes.[19]

Sedinger's reading expands this trouble to a moment that describes a desire beyond any possible representation. According to her, the transgressive importance of the cross-dressed actor lies in his/her capacity to direct the spectators' desire to a realm where distinct identities are dissolved. This utopian moment is not a predominantly socio-political one, but an individual one of psychic dynamics. "[F]or an indeterminate moment the spectator experiences a representation that necessarily gestures beyond itself, but the thing-in-itself that is presumed to lie behind or beyond the representation is non-existent. […] Thus, for the spectator the crossdresser makes possible the experience of desire in its purest form" (74). From this perspective, the transvestite body's appeal is metaphorical, transhistorical and universal.

As a figure of psychic liminality that points beyond the representable, the transvestite body comes to resemble an archetypal symbol such as Yin/Yang within the sexual domain. Not as a sexual object, but as the embodiment of a psychic desire and dynamics, s/he may become a symbol of the human dream for completeness, of the wish to achieve integration of opposites as in the alchemists' motto for the hermaphrodite: *discordia concors*. In its instability, s/he not only inspires this dream, but defers its fulfilment beyond representation, that is, beyond any supposed end of

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[18] Hegemonic medieval masculinity, for example, was based on natural law and expressed in the image of man as a father figure.

[19] Similar to Alisa Solomon's admittance that performances of gay male performers "whose work often seems pitched to a gay male spectator […] still reach [her] with a taboo-smashing promise of erotic variety and sexual adventure" (26), a contention she extends to lesbian performances as well. Implicitly, she acknowledges that object choice is a contingent division of the sexual drive. In principle, 'heterosexuals' can fantasise over same-sex scenarios as can 'homosexuals' over cross-sex scenarios, which puts the whole system of classification into doubt.

human history. The desire for completeness initiates the never ending history of psychic transgression, which by no means must necessarily result in a desire for socio-political changes.

The symbol and conceptual structure of Yin/Yang may actually be more helpful than it seems at first glance, to evaluate the symbolic status and social effect of the cross-cast actor who may further cross-dress on stage. Yin/Yang's dynamic and bipolar structure undercuts fixed hierarchies, acknowledges difference, and puts into relief the relation of both halves as a permanent struggle. The cross-cast actor, then, would not render bipolar gender obsolete as such, but would put into effect a structural critique of fixed gendered power structures and, at the same time, remind the sensitive spectators that in their lived reality it is impossible for them to harmonise the abstract equality of its halves (genders) into a balanced standstill. And as soon as gender loses its importance to define social hierarchies, the cross-cast and cross-dressed actor will lose its political significance, too. From then on, its now mythical lure fixes audience interest onto an unfulfillable psychic dream and onto pleasurable, but politically harmless erotic practices.

The crucial point within the objectives of this dissertation is that the cross-cast and cross-dressed actors' symbolic potential to produce political trouble is the stronger, the more a society depends on the category of gender and on exclusive heterosexual object choice to fix its symbolic and social hierarchy. Elizabethan England apparently relied much less on a link between sex and gender to stabilise social ranks than modern bourgeois society. Equally, the cultural and economic changes during the end of the

twentieth century point at a strategic devaluing of biological sex as a defining category to impose subject positions and stabilise social power in Western societies.[20]

As far as concepts of self and society are concerned, the contemporary cross-dressed actor clearly plays on different assumptions than the Elizabethan or Jacobean ones, although the revived interest in this figure points at characteristics common to both historical moments, namely a crisis of bourgeois sexual and social identities. In this context, Giddens (*Modernity*) speaks of a person's identity in late modernity as his or her individual "identity project." From Giddens' point of view, there is a contemporary demand, possibly regulated by socio-economic developments, for being able to transform one's personality almost *ad libitum* in order to adapt successfully to a broad variety of contradictory challenges and possibilities. In this scenario, any "essence" of the individual, then, is a temporary construction, or a temporarily necessary illusion. The newness of the situation is not the crisis, but the strategy to solve it and the horizon within wich it is applied. It seems fair to say that crossing borders, living transitory identities, is getting normalised, both in a descriptive as well as prescriptive sense. However, while sexual and gender transgressions lose their political edge, other borders hold firm – identity as the masterful result of an individual's self-fashioning apparently being one of them. The resilience of such identity at the beginning of the twenty-first century is supported by technological developments as diverse as plastic and sex-change surgery, the widespread use of computer generated images in entertainment and advertising, and the cyberspace populated with virtual identities. These different phenomena propose an understanding of identity that privileges identity as a self-chosen construction out of a set of images with no inherent

[20] But one must not forget that to say that women can now increasingly reach power positions formerly restricted to men does not mean a restructuring of the gender hierarchy, though it certainly implies a softening of the modern link between sex and gender.

truth. They share with the cross-dressed actor as described by Sedinger the structural similarity of presenting an always elusive identity. The absence of inherent truth is used to produce an ambiguous impression. As a spectator, you never know what you really get.

If we follow Giddens and take a liberal voluntarist reading of identity as the current hegemonic context, how can we maintain for contemporary all-male dramatic productions that the cross-dressed body on stage is still a transgressive symbol in political terms and a utopian one in psychic terms? Is it not the case that this utopia of psychic transgression has now found its realization in the cross-over aesthetics of consumer society? Is the volatile status of the transvestite figure on stage subservient to contemporary pressures on human beings to preserve self-determination and maximise pleasure by constructing one's identity around the capacity to cross borders? Under what conditions and through what representative forms can the transvestite body on the contemporary Shakespearean stage still be seen as a symbol of political and psychic "transgressive reinscriptions" (Dollimore, *Dissidence*)?[21]

A look into the performance history of Shakespeare's plays reveals how easily the cross-dressed actor's disruptive potential could have gone unnoticed or have been appropriated to foster the status of Shakespeare as a cultural icon for the educated bourgeoisie. When Judith Butler asks what kind of drag performances produces a destabilizing repetition (*Trouble* 134-141), she implicitly admits that not all

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[21] A transgressive reinscription does not project change to any kind of temporal or geographic beyond. Hence, it is not utopian in the traditional sense, for it does not, according to Dollimore, intend "an escape from existing structures but rather a subversive reinscription within them, and in the process their dislocation or displacement" (*Dissidence* 285). Such reinscription can imply an "oppositional" practice as well as a destabilizing perspective on a phenomenon in the lived reality of a society. Dollimore admonishes that "we should never expect transgression or subversion to change the social order miraculously. If transgression subverts, it is less in terms of immediate undermining or immediate gains, than in terms of the dangerous knowledge it brings with it, or produces, or which is produced in and by its containment in the cultural sphere" (*Dissidence* 88).

performances of males in women's clothing have such distancing effect.[22] Indeed, a quick look into the history of cross-dressed Shakespeare performances during the twentieth century alerts us that we must not take this effect for granted.

The existence of all-male productions of Shakespeare's drama in England in the twentieth century can be traced back to, on the one hand, William Poel, a late Victorian academic and theatre producer, who staged an all-male *Hamlet* in 1905, and the tradition of drama societies at English public schools, on the other. The notorious fotograph taken of Lawrence Olivier costumed as Katherine in a school production of *The Taming of a Shrew* may be the latter's most famous example (see appendix A). These all-male performances were traditionally justified on the grounds of a greatly enhanced apprehension of the plays' poetic quality, which was also taken as a sign of authenticity.[23] It was inconceivable to act out on stage sexual contents latent in the playtext. Since the actors were boys and not men, possible homosexual innuendos could be easily overlooked and moral decency was maintained. To Guy Boas, headmaster of Sloane School in London-Chelsea, these cross-dressed young actors constituted by no means a transgressive energy, a moment of crisis and anxiety within modern academia,[24] and we know of no other school headmaster who stated his concern about the morally corrupting effects of all-male boy performances on the participating youth

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[22] The aesthetics and political strategies of drag do not constitute the research object of this study, since they take place within a social and performatic environment completely different from dramatic productions of Shakespeare's plays. For an evaluation of drag as a politically conservative theatrical aesthetics, see especially Benedek and Binder, as well as Butler's *Psychic Life*, which adopts a more critical stance towards drag than *Gender Trouble*.

[23] On the lack of interest in authenticity in Poel's naturalist appropriations of Shakespeare's stage within the contemporary proscenium stage, see Speaight and Mazer. According to Mazer, "Poel claimed that his advocacy of the Elizabethan stage stemmed […] from the desire to stage Shakespeare as 'naturally and appealingly…as in a modern drama'" (56). I read this comparison in such a way that Poel's historicizing interest in an all-male *Hamlet* was not to challenge contemporary notions on gender of his time, but to bring them across in Shakespeare's drama in a more elegant way. In a similar vein, Speaight concludes that "Poel's Elizabethanism […] was puritan and refined" (101) and calls him "a high-minded Victorian" (100).

[24] Boas even believes that the plays are "more suited to schools than to the commercial theatre," because of their poetic, classic quality.

(or proudly watching parents and other adults). Instead, these performances were conceived as introducing young men into the poetic world of a national hero, whose language and dramatic art constitute what Michael Jamieson in 1964 termed "Shakespeare's celibate stage": a "virile" (92) stage where sexual differences between boy-actor and female character are rendered obsolete or sublimated into a fine example of male artistic illusion-making when depicting female characters. Poetic decorum prevails over visceral corporality and erotic innuendos, when these young actors play Desdemona, Cressida or Imogen, possibly because a) at this time, in general, Shakespeare's young couples were much less staged as driven by sexual desire than they were after the advent of Jan Kott's famous book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, and b) because in school drama, the Elizabethan association of theatre and theatricality with feigning, subversion, and anarchy has given way to concepts of theatre as a means to uplift the aesthetic and moral spirits of a bourgeoisie youth and audience.[25] Jan Kott's view of the universe in Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies as an almost absurd one, deeply shot through with anarchic sexual desires, is lightyears away from both Boas' educational and Poel's academic environments.[26] Indeed, Kott's approach cannot be reconciled with both interests in poetic harmony. Equally absent are female voices who reflect critically on these performances and their aesthetics as a theatre that at once excludes women and reifies femininity. Boas perfectly exemplifies the still unshaken

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[25] Jamieson wryly rebutes the scholarly competence of headmasters such as Boas, but acknowledges the educational effect: "I do not mean to disparage school performances of Shakespeare, but I suspect that their real purpose is to broaden the children's interests rather than to enable the masters who direct the productions to make scholarly points" ('Celibate' 75). Of course, the children's interests were assumed to be poetical.

[26] It must be acknowledged that Boas may do a bit of self-promotion citing only critiques favourite of his drama society (see 68-73). Yet, the presentation of Ian Clatworthy as Desdemona in Boas' book (see appendix B) can be read as organising the viewer's gaze in a disturbingly self-analytical way, for by placing a pensative Desdemona in front of a mirror, assuming a similar position to Clatworthy's on the illustration next to it, the page stages the question of Desdemona's and Clatworthy's gender identity (and via the mirror of the spectator interest in this blurring). In face of illustrations like this, one feels tempted

male claim for interpretative authority over femininity by stating that the young actor Godfrey Phillipp "was equally at ease whether symbolizing twentieth century feminine independence or Elizabethan feminine docility" (68-9).[27] What Ina Schabert ('Männertheater' 11-13) asserts for the Elizabethan theatre, namely that male actors and playwrights turned the notion of woman into a mere sign, a male fantasy and therefore produced a "theatre of men", becomes even more valid for the academic context of all-male performances of Shakespeare's plays in the very beginning of the twentieth century.[28] Where the cross-dressed actor's body goes unnoticed, it very easily confirms a focus on and claim for the male actors artistic genius.[29] Such a production constructs gender as a mere artistic category, not as a social category by which social hierarchies prescribe what are deemed possible or impossible ways of behaviour for a human being. It can do so by taking a male heterosexual perspective as the norm in which "women and boys are for the most part cattle of the same colour" (*As You Like It*, III.3.403). The question when evaluating the transgressive potential of a specific all-male performance is whether a production reveals strategies that may draw the audiences' critical attention to the constructed status of femininity and masculinity as to generate some kind of problematising or alienating disturbances a conventional staging would hardly be able to achieve. If it fails to do so, it makes little difference to those mixed cast performances

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to affirm that the purported absence of erotic innuendos is the result of a repressive act on the part of the spectators. The supposed poetic interest was shot through with latent erotic innuendos.

[27] For an illustration of one of Phillipp's colleagues at Sloane School, see appendix B.

[28] As late as 1967, the RSC could encourage the actors from the National Theatre on the eve of their premiere of Clifford Williams' all-male *As You Like It* by calling upon the actors: "may women prove the better by the help of good men" (Telegramm No. 28, undated). There is hardly a better example how male claims for superiority and artistic universalism linger on through the twentieth century.

[29] The same focus motivates Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's appraisal of an all-male production of Goldoni's *La Locandiera* in 1788. The absence of women on stage allows actors and male audience members to foster homosocial bonding that declares the superiority of male values such as artistic control, creativity and rationality. On an English translation of Goethe's account, see Ferries, p. 47-57. Schabert, citing Cixous' impression that, as a woman, going to the theatre is similar to going to her own funeral, implicitly raises the question what pleasure women can possibly take in all-male productions? Solomon locates this pleasure in the capacities of erotic imagination to cross mimetically established gender

where female actors model themselves according to the internalised expectations of hegemonic masculinity, i.e., their imagined male audience. In both cases, psychic and theatrical notions of male supremacy are successfully naturalised.

In a similar vein, contemporary claims for authenticity in all-male productions of Shakespeare's drama usually distance these all-male performances from an association with contemporary queer aesthetics, rather than associating them with the kind of gender transgression and anxiety described in Sedinger's or Levine's articles. These productions foreclose the possibility for subversive expressions of conventional gender concepts, together with its political implications. In doing so, they sound very much like a public relations strategy to participate in the ongoing bourgeois admiration for Shakespeare as a national icon, cultural genius and quite often a safe blockbuster.[30] Consequently, such productions often play down cross-dressing as a socio-political deconstruction[31] of unified gender attributes and focus instead unilaterally on the theatrical skill of costume and make-up designer as well as male actors to render the

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boundaries. To do so, one must neglect (and challenge) for a moment the stabilizing forces of socio-political power structures (see note 16).

[30] Of course, authenticity is a very suspect category. Even within a reconstructed Globe in London, different environmental interferences and, most of all, the change of theatrical tradition and audience fantasies when watching men playing women make it impossible to reconstruct an authentic Elizabethan drama. Roger Baker neatly sums it up: "Experimental productions of Elizabethan dramas with all-male casts, though offering perhaps new insights into textual complexities, can never get very close to the physical impact which these performances must have possessed. We have to lose too much baggage about sex, about actresses, about the stage as a visibly erotic playground which have accrued over the subsequent centuries" (60). To a similar effect, see Kathleen McLuskie: "The essentialism of modern notions of sexuality cannot bring together the image of a boy and the image of a coherent female personality, except through camp notions of sexual ambiguity as a cohering mode of interpretation" (130). Camp, however, ridicules in its own style all attempts at authenticity. On authenticity as a reified, highly controlled category at the Globe Theatre London and its theatre as a kind of Shakespearean theme-park, where past is related to present through postmodern eclectic concepts, see Worthen (*Force of Modern Performance*), especially chapter 2 "Globe performativity".

[31] In this dissertation "deconstruction" means the critical, analytical reading of a phenomenon that uncovers the difference between the phenomenon's (pre)supposed natural homogeneity and its conflictive, heterogenous structure (as revealed by such reading itself). One of the tenets of deconstructive readings as established by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, is to look at binary oppositions within a text (for instance, maleness and femaleness, or gayness and straightness) and to show how, instead of describing a rigid set of categories, the two opposing terms are actually fluid and impossible to fully separate. Cross-dressing and cross-casting may attest to (or work towards) this fluidity in terms of gender.

male actor's body, his physical reality irrelevant, so that no tension may be felt between the actor's and the character's sex and gender. A good example is the London New Globe's production of an all-male *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1999. Given the company's status as a mainstream tourist attraction, it may come as no surprise that the programme put so strong an emphasis on authenticity,[32] and Mark Rylance, the actor playing Cleopatra, so little on gender ambiguity: "I'm playing a role, which happens to be a female one, not impersonating a woman. I want the audience to focus on the character, not the person playing it." (*Daily Telegraph* 30.07.99) Although this might be just another example of the emphasis on language within British partially subsidised Shakespeare theatre, it is a clearly remarkable feature that Rylance can separate the stage appearance (after all, it is that which the audience can focus on) so fiercely from the actor's body and presence on stage. As a consequence, this all-male production of *Antony and Cleopatra* lacked both a homoerotic and a queer subtext, which is definitely a salient point when the leading actor is also a well-known gay activist.[33] The "absence" of the actor's body on stage foreclosed a metatheatrical play with signs that could have questioned binary notions of sexual and gender identity, discussing thus a difficult common ground for a future community between homo- and heterosexuals. As effective as this performance may have been theatrically, it seems to have presented a possibly teasing, but ultimately merely decorative form of cross-dressing. It was a highly successful, but conservative production, purified in its erotic effects and orthodox in its presentation of the human (male or female) psyche. As in Guy Boas' description of all-male boy school performances, we come across the phenomenon that contemporary all-male casting may not generate epistemological uncertainty and gender fluidity, and

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[32] In the globalised world, authenticity bestows upon the theatrical site the quality of exoticness. In this respect, there is no difference between African tribe dances, staged authentically for English tourists, and the New Globe productions staging authentic Shakespeare for the foreign tourist.

much less gender anxiety in a contemporary mainstream audience.[34] Cross-dressing alone does not assure an ironic mimicry, a de-mystifying deconstruction of established patriarchal gender identities.

The Early Modern arguments about the status of the cross-dressed stage allow an insight as to how the reception of the transvestite figure on stage is framed by a historically specific socio-economic context and the notion of identity it proposes as 'natural'. Chapter 2 provides a basic conception of this relation within the period that concerns the productions here studied, namely 1967 – 1994. The chapter establishes a conflictive socio-economic context beyond bourgeois patriarchy that allows to describe theoretical parameters of how all-male Shakespearean performances serve and challenge this context by way of their specific theatrical aesthetics and sexual politics.

The capacity of Shakespeare's texts to produce transgressive readings, actions, and fantasies is overtly or silently acknowledged ever since the need to bowdlerise them in the eigthteenth century. The description of the philological and performance history of *As You Like It* in chapter 3 focuses on how different social contexts have normalised different gender aspects of playtext and performance practice or considered them as potentially disruptive of the established morality and social hierarchy. The diachronic overview helps to sharpen the focus on questions that go beyond aesthetic (theatrical or philological) problems and touch changing socio-cultural performance fads at a given socio-historical moment. This focus goes for chapter 4, too, in which I analyse theatrical, erotic, and socio-political effects brought about by four all-male productions of *As You Like It*: Clifford Williams' at the National Theatre in London in 1967; Petrica Ionescu's at the Schauspielhaus in Bochum in 1976; Cheek by Jowl's highly acclaimed

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[33] For a critical summary of press reviews on this production, see Schuch, 265.

version, which came out first at the Hammersmith Lyric in London in 1991 and got revived in The Albery in the London West End in 1994 after extensive world-wide touring; and finally Katharina Thalbach's production at the now dissolved Schiller Theater in Berlin in 1993.

The critical interest in these analyses will not lie on the methodologically intricate evaluation as to what extent a specific performance managed to put on stage the full complexity of such a complex matter as "the playtext". It is rather concerned with establishing a relationship between performance, philological insight, the performance's reception and its socio-cultural context that deepens our understanding of performance history as a cultural form of social negotiation.[35] My critical measuring rod is rather the production's relation to its socio-historic context and not to the playtext as its purported point of reference, simply because my general interest in this dissertation is not to evaluate the excellence of the productions analysed, but the different functions of all-male Shakespeare performances within a late twentieth-century context.[36] If I had to define a criterium of excellence, I would pose the production's capacity mutually to enrich and vitalise playtext and contemporary socio-historic context for those who are present at the performance, the spectators. As regards this dissertation, I depend to a large extent on the reactions of those professional spectators called theatre critics.

However, not entirely dismissing performance study, the analyses carried out rely on procedures dealing with the collection of a variety of data concerning the

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[34] The conspicuous absence of queer strategies points at a form of self-censorship of those anxieties within the targeted audience. We must not forget that the Globe is playing to international tourists and English school classes.

[35] Given the lack of "first-hand" information, especially videos of all of the performances or my own experience as spectator, it would be inconsequential to judge the performance itself. Moreover, any attempts to draw on "first-hand" sources remain specious, as their interpretation is invariably filtered and informed by a number of contexts, not directly visualised on stage.

[36] For theoretical justifications see, among others, Bulman, Marinis, Worthen, Pavis. For scholars that argue in favour of authenticity and a playtext-centred performance criticism, see, among others, Rosenberg and Halio.

performance text in the theatre, as can be found in promptbooks, videos, photos, and interviews with artists involved in the productions. It is obvious, however, that none of these documents as such can reveal the authentic or objective meaning of the production. Given the openness of performance as a potentially non-unified texture produced from a weaving together on stage of different and possibly contesting contexts that stretch beyond what happens on stage, it seems futile to expect that the analyses and interpretations in chapter 4 could present such a meaning. Yet, if they manage to be inclusive of most of the material as well as coherent, they should clarify the readers' view on the possibilities and pitfalls of contemporary all-male Shakespearean performances of *As You Like It* in the context of Western European culture and its gender dynamics.

CHAPTER 2 Theatrical Aesthetics and Sexual Politics beyond Modern Bourgeois Patriarchy: Contemporary Perspectives on Gender and Sexuality in All-Male Shakespearean Performances

2.1 Beyond Bourgeois Patriarchy: Problems of Periodization

As discussed in the introduction, the changing norms of the socio-cultural context are crucial to evaluate the theatrical functions and socio-political effects of all-male performances. If, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, all-male dramatic performances using adolescent boy actors were seen by some as a threat to order and morality, they had ceased to be so under specific circumstances at the beginning of the twentieth century. Such performances had become adapted in theatrical style and dramatic conception to the morality and cultural norms of bourgeois society. The transgressive quality of all-male performances does not reside in the cross-casting, but in the way how they use and connect theatrical signs – casting and the actor's sex being only one of those signs – to present on stage notions as identity, sexuality, and community that stand in a problematic or non-problematic relation to their non-theatrical formulations.

Despite the fact that from antiquity to present times Western societies have been living through a period of patriarchy, what has been accepted as 'normal' gender manifestation is far from uniform. Patriarchy in Western culture is not a unified phenomenon. It is a historically changing form of male domination and each form reveals specific inner tensions. As far as the historical time pertinent for this dissertation is concerned, I understand that the various hegemonic representations of Western patriarchy, its family and economic organizations, sexual norms and gender attitudes, are relatable to three historical periods: pre-modern, modern and post-modern. This

rough historical outline hinges on a notion of modernity that is often identified with the Enlightenment's centering of subjectivity in a rationalistic and scientific ego, endowed with self-interest and free will. The hegemonic model for modern subjectivity is Cartesian, the hegemonic economic mode of production is capitalism, and the hegemonic subject is the bourgeois subject. In this sense, I use *modern*, *bourgeois*, and *capitalist* to qualify the same reality from different angles.

The contemporary argument concerning poststructuralism and its critique of the modern bourgeois subject with its Cartesian underpinnings indicates a controversial rearrangement of hegemonic subjectivity in the highly industrialised nations. How this rearrangement is linked to new ways of economic production is an unsettled debate. No matter whether this incipient post-Cartesian subjectivity is linked to a rising post-industrial society or to the economic logic of late capitalism (seen either as destructive or productive), this cultural crisis is generally discussed under the terms late modernity or postmodernism.

The term 'postmodernism' suggests a break with modernism that is problematic and generally difficult to define, since elements of postmodern paradigms may also be conceived as a radicalisation of modernism proper, especially in a usage as in *modernist* or *modernism* (see, for example, Berman, Huyssen). For Fredric Jameson, high modernism – what Berman calls modernist – and postmodernism share the common feature that they are directed against main expressions of hegemonic bourgeois capitalist culture. But whereas high modernism believed to be able to recuperate the humanist legacy betrayed by the capitalist dynamics of bourgeois production, those cultural styles that qualify as "postmodern" do not directly criticise capitalist dynamics, its market economy and consumer culture that, in fact, have done away with bourgeois humanist values (Jameson 304-5). In Jameson's account of postmodernism as the

cultural logic of late capitalism, there is little critical capacity within postmodernist attitudes when it comes to capitalist values. Therefore, within the context of this work, the adjective "postmodernist" in Jameson's understanding is termed "late modernist" to foreground economic continuity.

However, it is clear that many cultural (artistic and philosophical) projects actually stand in a critical position to the founding premises of late capitalist society and its veneration of "the market". These projects stand in a strained position to the utopian principles of both high modernism and late modernism as simply two versions of bourgeois eschatology.[37] The evidence gathered in the introduction to this dissertation suggests that all-male dramatic performances can adapt their theatrical principles to these aesthetic and socio-political discourses.

At present, so-called poststructuralist models of identity have brought under attack the Cartesian bourgeois subject with its belief in autonomy, coherence and transcendental rationality (without actually debunking its politically and economically hegemonic position). Within the academia and gradually in the social reality, too, bourgeois' idealist concepts of human identity are being replaced by sometimes disconcerting insights in the human subject's dependencies, its inner fragmentation and inevitable, possibly self-ironic, complicity with self-interest as an impulse towards power. At the same time, the entertainment industry and advertising campaigns promote images of identity that maintain modern notions of the free subject by symbolically covering over boundaries of gender, race, and class and putting the polymorphous realm of consumption as the new path to plenitude.

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[37] Books and essays on postmodernism in culture and economy take pains to distinguish between late and postmodern attitudes. A comprehensive and extensive overview of the different approaches is given in Taylor and Winquist.

Both late modern and postmodern approaches qualify this present situation as a time of cultural change – the former as the coming about of late capitalist society as the new utopia of pleasure and perfection, the latter as the attempt to rewrite critically modern discourses in art and ethics in order to undermine the utopian promise. Thus, the issue is only superficially about periodization.[38] The real struggle is fought over the question whether the current economic and philosophical developments represent a step towards a fragmented, but more dialogical human civilization (cf. Lyotard's end of the master narratives; the rising concern about multi-culturalism and ecological issues, a growing regionalization) or a more or less catastrophic apotheosis and implosion of bourgeois capitalism (cf. the proliferation of violence, the crisis of democracy, the rising hegemony of technology, the on-going destruction of natural resources and the so-called globalization). In a less moralist phrasing, the struggle is over the status of so-called "postmodern" structures as either another masque and expression of late capitalist principles or as a legitimate starting point and indication of a post-capitalist order. To distinguish between both positions, I use in this dissertation the terminology "late modern" and "postmodern".

Given my concern about the formative influence of socio-historical contexts on the social meaning and theatrical effects of all-male casting, I shall outline in the following three sections the dominant construction of Western patriarchy, its ideal notions of identity, sexuality, and community within a bourgeois, a late and a post-bourgeois context. Hegemonic versions always resemble idealised self-portraits. Since I describe ideal conceptions, i.e., hegemonic ideological constructions, they by no means exhaust or prescribe the possible forms under which people experienced or experience

[38] Given the complexity of cultural changes, any definition of a cultural period will always have to reckon with fuzzy boundaries–a problem which haunts also the limits between medieval, renaissance and modern times.

themselves and their desires. But hegemonic versions of gender and sexuality build a cultural frame against which people (as well as works of art) had or have to struggle when building up or expressing their notion of self. In doing so, human beings incorporate this frame critically into their individual practices in order to make sense of their experience.

2.2 Identity Politics Within and Beyond Bourgeois Subjectivity

2.2.1 Modern Bourgeois Identity: Performing Phantasmagoric Stability

The programme of Adrian Noble's RSC production of *As You Like It* in 1985 used a quote from Ian McEwan's *Or shall we die?* to make clear the production's critical position towards the restoration of patriarchal society in the dramatic narrative of the play. McEwan identifies traditional physics as embodied by Newton and its impartial, stable, and objective observer with the male or Yang principle, whereas the new physics, inaugurated by Einstein and based on an oberserver engaged in and pervaded by the observed subject matter, who moreover knows "that at the heart of things there are limitations and paradoxes", is described as the female or Yin principle. Yang is identified with inner stability, whereas Yin is characterised through inner heterogeneity. And McEwan concludes: "Shall there be womanly times, or shall we die?"

This is not the place to argue against McEwan's conflation of scientific, Jungian archetypal, and socio-biological categories. What matters is the function of this quote. Printed in the show's programme, it clarifies the production's intention to press for a change in cultural paradigms. Consequently, the production put forward a critique of traditional masculinity which concerned not only the masculine world at court in Act I but also the reconciled patriarchal order in Act V. Noble seemed to have been a bit

unsure how to bridge the distance between the Jungian utopia and social reality, since he reworked the last scene, when the show got transferred from Stratford-upon-Avon to London. But in its final visual resolution of the journey from Arden back to the court (see section 3 of this dissertation and Gay, *As She Likes It*), when the actors first face the audience and then consciously turn round to leave backstage, the production clearly tried to problematise the relation of its Jungian gender utopia to a modern bourgeois notion of identity and social reality that forces men and women to live in separate social spheres and to represent two radically different qualities and identities.

Structurally, modern bourgeois identity based this notion of clearly separated gender boundaries on a Cartesian subjectivity that foregrounded a rational *I* released from any form of heteronomy and modelled on scientific, mainly mathematical, modes of thinking.[39] The rationalising and calculating impulse implies a reifying approach to the world, which lies at the heart of modern concepts about technique and economy, but extends ultimately to all social relations.[40] The natural world, and this includes one's own body and (official) sexuality, is transformed into an object for the dominating subject to exercise its self-affirmative desire for manipulation and control.[41] As owners of their own body and its different kinds of properties, human beings now form social relations not based on traditions deemed natural along a father-child axis, but on contracts based on self-interest and free will. In this sense, as a character, Rosalind in *As You Like It* has clearly modern traits by actively choosing and training her future

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[39] *Mutatis mutandis*, Descartes, Hobbes, and Leibniz all viewed and developed their notion of truth based on mathematical principles.

[40] Still seminal to this evaluation is the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* by Adorno/Horkheimer.

[41] On the complex relations between religion, science and economy in seventeenth century Puritanism, see the discussion in Münch, especially vol. 1, 127 – 164. Münch also compares in his study Puritan English and Lutheran German legacies on the "culture of modernity" in both countries. As far as questions of morality, sexuality and gender are concerned, little differences exist between German and English conceptions of bourgeois identity. Furthermore, as Münch contends, Germany's integration into an anglicised West after World War II greatly helped to diminish cultural differences between Germany and England. And that is the context pertinent to the performance analyses in chapter 4.

husband and coaxing her father into consenting to the marriage she has brought about. But whereas she displays the kind of self-determination very much cherished by contemporary liberal feminism, she is not able to maintain control of her impulses, so crucial an ability to exert power in the modern patriarchal social sphere. This hybrid interiority, partly male and partly female, makes her suspicious not only for modern patriarchy but also for modern feminism. Her self-determination does not fit modern gender essentialism.

The modern essentialist conception of human identity follows from the foundation of the modern subject in rational activity, necessarily defined as universal and stable. The truth about a person's identity, then, is not a rhetorical effect – and rhetorical is the verbal equivalent to the physical terms *performative* and *theatrical* – but the direct consequence of human rationality as a clear mirror of God's perfection as rational idea.[42] This qualification defines the nature of modern essentialism. Consequently, human beings have to adapt their psychic life to the principles of this rational truth. In other words, they have to define and reify themselves, construct a fixed notion of a unified, masterful "I" to limit and dominate the psychic impulses. The construction of such an ego-based identity relies on what Judith Butler, drawing on Michael Haar, identifies as a metaphysics of substance that gives psychological categories its specific modern form:

> It was grammar (the structure of subject and predicate) that inspired Descartes' certainty that "I" is the subject of "think," whereas it is rather the thoughts that come to "me": at bottom, faith in grammar simply conveys the will to be the "cause" of one's thoughts. The subject, the self, the individual, are just so many false concepts, since they transform into substances fictitious unities having at the start only a linguistic reality. (*Trouble* 20)

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[42] This at least is Descartes' justification of rationality as transcendentally fundamented and thus of reliable stability in his meditations.

To become that subject and to conform to the cultural pressure for such a stable identity, subjects must perform an act of almost violent self-discipline that establishes clear boundaries between the 'I' and the 'not I'. Butler calls this foreclosure the founding act of the subject.

Thus, this linguistic pitfall of grammar fosters the repressive production of substantive identity (and its abjected others) "that conceals the fact that 'being' a sex or a gender is fundamentally impossible" (*Trouble* 19). This rigid construction of identity and its abjected "other" is not just an emotional flaw, but the unavoidable consequence of the bourgeois concept of the ego-based self as masterly fixed and endowed with universal qualities.[43]

However, bourgeois identity is constantly shot through with notions of threat and failure, for such identity is inwardly and outwardly confronted and challenged by constant processes of differentiation, be it as the result of disintegrating systems of meaning (logical enquiry), the differentiation of lived reality into separated segments (economic development), or unsurpassable deviant inner desires.[44] Thus, the stable, homogeneous status of the bourgeois subject is an artificial and ultimately phantasmagoric one, what Butler calls a "regulatory fiction", an unattainable ideal with formative power. Or, put slightly differently, bourgeois subjectivity is that kind of performatic construction of homogeneity that disavows its performatic character.

The metaphysics of substance does not explain the central position of gender as a marker of identity within bourgeois society. John MacInnes argues that gender offered a way to maintain formal equality between human beings – a tenet of modern thought –

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[43] There is no other sense of strong ego-identity available but this modern selfish one. Of course, it has no intrinsic connection with (biological) maleness, despite its ideologic association with masculinity. What many liberal feminists claim is women's right to such a masterful identity and the concomitant social power positions.

while simultaneously insisting on the pragmatic value of inequality (3). The bourgeois gender concept constitutes the legacy of pre-modern patriarchal attitudes within a modern context. Gender became an essential marker of individual identity because as such it allowed male bourgeois contract theorists such as Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau to invent an interpretation of sexual differences as socially useful and justified for both sexes, because it followed "natural propensities". Contract theorists could declare that all human beings are free and equal, while accepting simultaneously that unequal social relations between the sexes are in fact naturally ordered: gender has become the social expression of biological sexual dimorphism.[45] Although physical strength gave men no right over women, it provided them with the ability to "take care of" women, which justified male rule. This is the kind of benign patriarchy re-installed so often, according to Erickson, in the festive endings of Shakespeare's comedies.

From the very beginning of bourgeois society, the clear socio-psychological division of sexes as expressed in bourgeois gender ideology is paramount to organise public and private spheres and restrict individual forms of self-fashioning.[46] The will to maintain men at the centre of the modern social system had to be complemented ideologically by putting them at the centre of the modern symbolic system.[47] The so-

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[44] For an extensive critical description of the challenges to epistemological unity produced by the socio-economic dynamics, see Willems and Hahn.

[45] As Thomas Laqueur has analysed, the beginning of bourgeois society is concomitant with the development of what he calls the two-sex model: "[T]he old model, in which men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection, their vital heat, along an axis whose telos was male, gave way by the late eighteenth century to a new model of radical dimorphism, of biological divergence. An anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man" (5-6). The process, however, began as early as the middle of the seventeenth century.

[46] Compare also the importance of work division (men out of home, women at home) when it came to render gender dichotomies intelligible, especially those that postulated *male = rational and economically productive* and *women = emotional and biologically reproductive.* On the socio-economic construction of gender dichotomies, see Hausen. As for the identity of bourgeois and male virtues and the development of essentialist gender identities in nineteenth century Germany, see especially Frevert.

[47] Although the Middle Ages were certainly a patriarchal era, the fact that most of the churches and cathedrals were dedicated to "Our beloved Virgin" makes one wonder as to the purportedly unambiguous symbolic centrality of masculinity.

called phallocentric gender system derives from that will to put men not only at the center of social power, but also at the center of symbolic power. From now on, feminine gender markers represent such lack of power and masculine pretend to affirm it.[48]

The bourgeois' interest in stabilizing a fixed two-sex model with specific gendered qualities as essential elements of the individual produced a much more rigid and clear cut set of sexual norms as regards sexual orientation as well as sexual practices in general.[49] Alan Sinfield has described how bourgeois culture worked to impose a hetero/homo division on human sexuality, and Foucault locates the "invention" of hetero- and homosexuality as well defined, distinct practices in the late nineteenth century.[50] Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century "sexual life was beginning to be seen as something more than a mere set of sensations: to possess a sexuality was to lay claim to a distinctive form of subjectivity" (Glover and Kaplan xvi). Bourgeois society had installed what Adrienne Rich calls "compulsory heterosexuality" and Judith Butler the "heterosexual matrix". Sexuality had become a category to judge someone's identity as acceptable or not and heterosexual object choice aiming at biological reproduction became the norm.[51] That is why marginalization on account of sexual orientation and object choice could become a

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[48] This functionality seriously limits the critical potential of liberal identity politics, whose notion of equality takes the free (and masculine!) individual of contract theory as its norm. In fact, hierarchic continuity attests to a gender relation where the feminine continues to be orientated towards masculinity as the dominant, and in this sense superior, form of human existence, which in turn is orientated towards the absolute idea and pure rationality, the modern notion of God. Laqueur's two-sex model analyses the bourgeois separation of the sexes on a biological basis, but such bipolar "incommensurability", given the real and symbolic power of male characteristics, is far from constituting gender equality.

[49]For pre-modern subjectivity sexuality was not 'of the essence.' As Alan Bray has shown, "the signals of male friendship (…) overlapped with those of sodomy" (in Sinfield 32), a term that in Elizabethan England denominated all kinds of stigmatised behavior (see Introduction). The unimportance of object choice in a Freudian sense is further endorsed by the fact that both women and boys were considered unfinished men (Orgel 59-70).

[50] Note also that "[t]he *Supplement* to the OED records that both the words heterosexuality and homosexuality first entered the English language in an 1892 translation of the well-known study*, Psychopathia Sexualis*, by the Austrian sex researcher, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902)" (Bristow 4).

[51] In the first chapter of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes how bourgeois identity is achieved through a self-discipline that is functional to the capitalist work scheme and its exploitation of human

striking feature of bourgeois patriarchy, whereas it is widely absent from pre-bourgeois as well as late bourgeois accounts of sexualities.[52]

Within a modern bourgeois context, all-male performance can only get away with their theatricality by vigourously suppressing sexual innuendos, and this implies rendering the male actors' bodies irrelevant. As a consequence, many potentially metatheatrical comments in the playtext concerning the presence of these bodies are taken at face value and the metatheatrical layer of meaning gets obscured. Such streamlining can get recognised not only in many of the Globe's all-male productions, but also in the majority of its all-female ones, which are likewise based on the assumption that the actor's sex should matter nothing on stage, only the character's. If Rylance shuns subversive gender politics from the stage of *Antony and Cleopatra*, as explained in the introduction, so do Barry Kyle and Kathryn Hunter, director and leading actor of the all-female *Richard III* in 2003. The fact that the contemporary audience does not feel the need to hold back laughter – an impulse confessed by the critic Max Beerbohm on the occasion of Sarah Bernhardt playing Hamlet – points at the growing success of liberal feminist politics, as recalls Barry Kyle: "It's envitable that many people, when they look at this project, will want the woman thing to be the first thing that's addressed. But […] we see it in broader terms. […] These days, women work, fight and make decisions as much as men do. We're not locked in some blunt loggerhead over sexual politics the way we were 30 years ago" (Allfree). In other words, the show does not intend to deconstruct the relation of power and masculinity in

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work force. The mode of construction is repression of all sexual impulses that do not work towards reproduction.

[52] To be an openly gay politician, for instance, is not only no problem within contemporary politics, but – once disclosed – it may even enhance one's popularity, as in the cases of the current mayors of Berlin and Paris, Klaus Wowereit and Bertrand Delanoe. Yet, as far as I know, no openly lesbian woman has managed to get into an important political office. This indicates that a traditional gender hierarchy persists in late bourgeois tolerance towards homosexuality – despite legal equality.

modern patriarchy, but simply prove that efficient professionalism is no longer a male domain. Critics concur that the stage interpretations of Shakespeare's plays gain little from that device, if compared to traditional mixed cast shows. Their relative normality attests to MacInness's thesis that within the development of bourgeois society, gender loses its importance as a marker of social dominance. Within the structures of late capitalist economy, competence and efficiency have become widely disconnected from gender. Since the Globe's same-sex productions are set up to prove exactly this professional excellence for both sexes,[53] they are in line with basic bourgeois values. Yet, these professional values are imbued with bourgeois notions of power, of being in control, that turn such values problematic, regardless of their association with masculinity, femininity, or none of the two. The main flaw common to all same-sex productions at the Globe in London seems to me this unwillingness to tackle questions of power and their impact on human emotionality as well as these productions' readiness to surrender a possible political reading to a supposed historical accuracy. The conservative, almost out-dated character of this performance style, especially as an impersonation of meaningful identity, becomes highlighted when one compares its claim for authoritative authenticity to a notion of identity that from the 1970s on has gained visibility and public attention and challenged the moral and sexual presuppositions of bourgeois society and economy by advancing a utopia of physical extravagance and of a volatile, cruising desire, which crosses sexual orientations and gender manifestations not in the name of professional excellence (as a form of self-

[53] One of the main reasons to set up all-female performances at the Globe was the female actors' complaint about being professionally prejudiced by all-male performances. The relative aesthetic unimportance of the actors' gender in the Globe Theatre, especially if compared to historically accurate costumes and music, is further attested by the (somewhat strange) fact that the all-female performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2004 is termed an "original practice production" in the programme.

control) but of libidinal plenitude (as a form of transgressing images of the self), as we shall analyse in the next section.

The bourgeois model of sexuality is widely hegemonic up to the last quarter of the twentieth century, when the sexual and moral norms of bourgeois culture visibly started to shift. They started to do so with Freud, but with the Feminist and Gay Liberation movements of the late 1960s onwards non-bourgeois norms entered popular culture and mass media. By the end of the twentieth century, one can notice not only a growing tolerance towards different styles of sexual behaviour in Western culture, but, what's more, the binary constructions of sexuality as either "hetero" or "homo" and of sexual practices as "good" or "bad", "legitimate/natural" or "illegitimate/unnatural" have come under attack. The link between an acceptable identity and a specific sexual object choice is no longer hegemonic in Western European countries. The public and legal acceptance of homosexual relationships is one indicative, among others, that the bourgeois model of society – with its tenets of inner unity and purity as well as gender-based fixed hierarchies – is starting to crumble down or at least that society is being rearranged along different power axes.

2.2.2 Late Bourgeois Subjectivity: Performing Erotic Desublimation

Andreas Giesen, PR-Manager of the Shakespearefestival Neuss in Germany, is adamant about the absence of subversive connotations in all-male performances: "With a good company, you forget within five minutes that it is only men acting. All that matters is character then."[54] This remark, very similar to Mark Rylance's quoted in the

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[54] Telephone interview with the author, 12.07.03. In the same interview, as regards Wild Thyme Productions all-female *Hamlet* from 2003, Giesen opined that it was not only an exciting performance, but also the most subtle *Hamlet* he has ever seen on stage, not the least due to the fact that it was an all-female company. Comparing both statements, we should at least consider that what Giessen calls "forgetting about the actor's sex" may well be a strategy of the production not to problematise the relation

Introduction, attests to an aesthetic fascination with the possibility of completely disconnecting the character from the actor's sex. But we should not become blinded by the fascination with the actor's artistic capacity, and ask what might get lost through cross-gender casting. Philip Fisher reminds us that the intensity with which audience members perceive a character is also informed by the capacity to relate its stage figure to the outer reality, their own lived reality. For Fisher, in Edward Hall's *Rose Rage*, the production "would surely have been stronger with a female Margaret of Anjou." The actor's sex may be crucial, especially when it comes to understand a female figure's fight for survival and power, for a female actor serves as an easier proxy for spectators, and hence is more easily capable of invoking and drawing on what Spivak might call a strategic essentialism. Fisher's impression might be his own, but it could make us wary of all-male performances as diminishing our sensitivity for the men-women-relation on stage as one that reflects a very real social power relation.

The tendency to generate theatrical reality as a separate reality in its own right, as a potentially dream-like world separated from the lived social reality of the spectators, may well inform all-male productions with predominantly entertaining goals. Such a theater can powerfully suggest what impressed Ingeborg Pietzsch in Katharina Thalbach's all-male production of *As You Like It* at the Schiller Theater in Berlin in 1993, namely, a rendering of the borders between nature and art obsolete in favour of the delights found in the play of make-belief. The categories of truth or reality do not matter anymore. Doubling the dukes and the courtiers in this commedia dell'arte version of *As You Like It* sufficed to cut out the political parable, as insinuated by

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between actors' sex and gender and the characters' within its own theatrical language. Reasons for this decision may be manifold, but as long as the cross-casting is not used to produce metatheatrical reflections on stage, these kinds of performances tend to explore the gender-character relation from an essentialist rather than a social constructionist point of view, as if the sex and gender of the actor necessarily determine the interpretation of character along gendered categories.

Schaper. It turned not oly Arden but also the court scenes into a succesion of theatrically delightful, perfectly stylised gags. The world on stage became decontextualised from possible off stage referents. Robin Detje, playing with the physicality of the stage set, summoned up the non-political effect of this production: "*Alles ist aus Holz an diesem Abend. So viele Bretter, die nicht die Welt, sondern bloß Spaß bedeuten wollen!*"[55]

The possible effect of downplaying realist mimetic elements; of minimizing the importance of the social context of both character and performance; of promoting dramatic comedy as the pastime of a "fun and pleasure society" on and off stage, all this takes on more problematic aspects if we link these effects to contemporary tendencies to perceive human life as a sequence of role-playing activities through which a non-substantive self asserts its masterful autonomy in search for emotional thrills. These tendencies are linked to economic and cultural changes in Western affluent societies that gained critical academic interest throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Sociological and cultural studies identified as social background of these tendencies a rapid fragmentation and exchangeability of relationships and, as a result, an increasing relativity of values and norms. Such relativity began to characterise the lived reality within late capitalist structures and to undermine inner unity and stability as the basis for a functional and socially acceptable identity. Consequently, as an answer to this threat, a model of subjectivity became promoted that adapted the concept of masterful identity to the changed socio-economic circumstances.

A good example of this transformation can be found in Ulrich Beck's understanding of the late capitalist economy as founding the "global risk society". In his opinion, under the pressure of a new economic dynamics, the unity of self gets

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[55] "Everything is made of wood this night. So many boards that do not intend to signify the world, but

abandoned in order to maintain its capacity to master the fluid outer world and its challenges. Beck states that

> the self is no longer just the unequivocal self but has become fragmented into contradictory discourses of the self. Individuals are now expected to master these "risky opportunities" without being able, owing to the complexity of modern society, to make the necessary decisions on a well-founded and responsible basis, that is to say, considering the possible consequences (7).

Beck captures an important element of late modern (he calls it the *second modern*) identity, namely the readiness to accept this fragmentation and use it functionally, i.e., in service of power, fulfillment of desire and professional success. The realization of a preordained inner coherence so important for bourgeois identity is no relevant category anymore. Instead, the instabilities of the global risk society call for qualities such as flexibility, adaptability and openness. A "multi-optional" (Meuser and Behnke) personality is promoted to become a new ideal of self-fashioning.

However, the expectation to master these risky opportunities points at an important continuity between bourgeois and late bourgeois notions of self, namely the necessity to maintain control, however illusionary, over one's lived circumstances. Late bourgeois subjectivity avoids the insight into its various forms of dependence by cultivating a fantasy of self that is characterised not by a fixed essence but its unlimited ability to be master of oneself in the most varied circumstances. This also means that the subject which realises that volatile autonomy draws on bourgeois ideals of subjectivity and is still gendered as masculine.

If bourgeois subjectivity is based on a (however illusionary) notion of truth as natural law, late bourgeois subjectivity sees truth as a metaphor which is at human beings' disposal to be manipulated. The powerful role which the media industry could achieve in late capitalist society attests to this shift. In this sense, late bourgeois

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only fun!"

epistemology maintains the ego-centredness of modern bourgeois subjectivity, and frees it of any remnant of religious stability. Thus, it can substitute the modern belief in the universal and stable rationality with the insight into the fundamental instability and relativity of such rationality. As a result, late bourgeois subjectivity cherishes the volatility of desire as its new basis. The subject's experience of agency and freedom are based on and guaranteed by the flow of desire, not its repression and the reign of objective rationality as in bourgeois subjectivity. In other words, the flow of desire becomes a new regulatory fiction.

In this context, Zygmunt Baumann states that the new forms of social control do not work through normative prescriptions, but along such lines as seduction and the channeling of desire. Contemporary Western societies are less interested in people who are fit to serve in the armed forces and the factory than in good consumers. Most of the people are being socialised into what Bauman calls "sensation-seekers and –gatherers" (22), subjects functional to keep consumer society going. To fulfill this desire for sensations, late capitalist economic and cultural propaganda decontextualise the subject, her/his freedom, agency and self-fashioning from any political context and transfer these notions to the aesthetic realm. Freedom and agency are most easily expressed ("bought and sold") as lifestyle options (Giddens, *Modernity*).[56] This is not a terribly new solution, as various forms of decadent aesthetics prove. Yet, with late bourgeois subjectivity, this formally subcultural way to pursue happiness becomes hegemonic. If people are constantly asked by both professional and consumerist pressures to reinvent

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[56] There is a clear class bias in this hedonist utopia, which is hardly made explicit. Even Giddens (*Modernity*), who usually downplays problems of class, admits "that 'lifestyle' refers only to the pursuits of the more affluent groups or classes. The poor are more or less completely excluded from the possibility of making lifestyle choices. […] Indeed, class divisions and other fundamental lines of inequality, such as those connected with gender or ethnicity, can be partly *defined* in terms of differentiated access to forms of self-actualisation and empowerment […]. Modernity, one should not forget, produces *difference*, *exclusion* and *marginalisation*" (5-6). As discussed in the Introduction, the whole phenomenon of

their identity, those cultural transgressions concerning identity as style become positively associated with this new hegemonic identity structure. Style becomes truth. It loses its ironic associations, which it can maintain in face of bourgeois humanist notions of truth. Consequently, gender as a marker of social existence has lost importance and turned into a marker of individual style. In this aesthetic context, the ideal late bourgeois subject successfully pretends to be an actor and author of his/her own playtext. Her/his lived reality takes on the characteristics of her/his own theatrical script.

Another effect of the unmooring of morality from its origins in natural law or social tradition is a change in sexual practices that are increasingly distanced from heterosexual object choice and reproduction. Volkmar Sigusch notes a much more free-floating erotics in the conflation of sexual and non-sexual, i.e., narcissist, impulses within contemporary sexualities:

> *Die neuen Selbstpraktiken, beispielsweise fetischistische und sadomasochistische, die mit großer Selbstverständlichkeit inszeniert werden, sind insofern typische Neosexualitäten, als das triebhaft Sexuelle im alten Sinn nicht mehr im Vordergrund steht. Sie sind zugleich sexuell und nonsexuell, weil Selbstwertgefühl, Homöostase und Befriedigung nicht nur aus der Mystifikation der Triebliebe und dem Phantasma der orgastischen Verschmelzung beim Geschlechtsverkehr gezogen werden, sondern ebenso und stärker aus dem Thrill, der mit der nonsexuellen Selbstpreisgabe und der narzißtischen Selbstfindung einhergeht.* (7)[57]

In effect, within the limited sphere of lived reality as lifestyle, a hedonist subject that crosses exclusive gender identity is constituted as role model for contemporary

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"metrosexuality" is a perfect example for both the class bias and the non-political consumerist background. In fact, the late modern hedonist utopia is based on this political blindness and insensibility.

[57]"The new expressions of the self, for example fetishistic and S/M practices, that are being performed with utter naturalness, are sexual and non-sexual at the same time, since self-value, homöostasis, and satisfaction are not only derived from the mystification of desire and the phantasma of an orgasmic union in sexual intercourse, but also and even more from the thrill that comes along with a non-sexual revelation of self and the narcissist invention of self (my translation)." I am quoting from both German and English sources, because a comparison of the work of German and English scholars suggests a certain parallelism between German and English societies in the development of such late modern subjectivity, due probably to a parallel cultural and economic development after World War II (see Münch and note 41). Both German and English scholars describe the late bourgeois subject and its sexuality in similar terms, noting a change from repressive to desublimating, polymorphous constructions of subjectivity. Within this dissertation, such a suggestive sketch must suffice, since a detailed comparative cultural analysis would be beyond its scope.

consumerist subjectivity. The consequences for the relation between culture and sexuality as well as the socio-political meaning of gender aspects are enormous, if we recall that Glover and Kaplan could state that "to possess a sexuality was to lay claim to a distinctive form of subjectivity" (xvi). The distinction is now not between homo- and heterosexualities, but between modern and late modern sexualities, not between male and female identity, but between binary modern and hybrid late modern identity styles. To act out one's erotic fantasies, to cross socially established gender boundaries, ceases to represent a political challenge, as it did under modern morality.[58] Instead, in the change from bourgeois to late bourgeois identities, polymorphous sexual practices become culturally legitimated (though not necessarily the norm), as long as they take place between consenting adults. In this context, Gunter Schmidt has observed that contemporary morality is no longer concerned with sexual practices, but with the existence (or establishing) of a consensual basis for these practices. Sexual practices are condemned only when this basis is judged as lacking (as, for example, in cases of pedophilia) (*Verschwinden* 10-14).

Late modern anti-essentialism turns gender into one exterior attribute among others that mark human individuality as a specific surface identity. As such, gender can be acquired through the wearing of clothes and the acquisition of gender marked gestures and behavior. The problem with this concept is not – as humanist critique would like to have it – that it eschews substantive identity with its fixed set of moral values, but rather what it puts in its place, a conglomeration of reified, decontextualised attributes that are said to be at the disposal of an individualised, socially isolated

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[58]As Foucault rightly saw, under bourgeois circumstances, sexual liberation gains the radiance of political liberation: "We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost: nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of

subject. Furthermore, to claim that these elements are at the disposal of the subject implies once more an autonomy for this subject, for his/her ways of self-definition.[59] As such, this non-essentialist identity is still bound by the modern bourgeois regulatory fiction of autonomy and self-ownership. Only that by now this autonomy is defended not only against society but also nature.

Therefore, the use of sexuality and the status of the body within late modern subjectivity seem indeed marked by what Foucault has called "repressive desublimation," whereby he meant the multiple social channelling of sexuality as a means to integrate the human being into the controlled circuits of the economy.[60] One of the main instruments used by the process of "repressive desublimation" is a wide-spread social representation of the body, or what Foucault calls the "politics of the body". According to him, far from being engaged in freeing the body and sex from its social constraints and complicity with hegemonic power, this late modern politics is now engaged in making both body and sexuality more and more visible, attaching them to

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prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality , and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required. For the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics" (5).

[59] It is this will in bourgeois consciousness to decontextualise itself that produces what Judith Butler criticises as the voluntarily wrong reading of her work. Her critical trajectory is of special interest for this dissertation, because it is not only concerned with the body as a cultural site on which social power is inscribed and from where it may get challenged, but because it can be understood as a critique of both bourgeois and late bourgeois modes of identity production.

[60] Freud describes the process of sublimation as one in which libido is transferred from a sexual to a non-sexual object, transforming the character of the system of drives itself. To sublimate is to de-sexualise object relations, whereas to desublimate is to sexualise object relations. See Freud's considerations in his essays collected in *Das Ich und das Es und andere metapsychologische Schriften*, especially the one that gave the book its title. Following Freud's suggestion that processes of sublimation still follow the erotic objective to fuse opposites and bring about images and experience of union, I shall use the term sublimation in a more specific sense in my performance analyses, especially of Clifford William's production. Within the field of theatrical aesthetics, I shall use the term sublimation to describe a treatment of the body on stage that suppresses its physical, erotic attraction and transfers this attraction to an imagined spiritualised union beyond the experience of everyday reality. Physically purified, such aesthetic (Williams will call it "poetic") "sexuality" can participate on a supposedly higher sphere, namely the realm of semiotics, in the union promised by sexual attraction. The relation between "sublimation" and "the sublime", as used in this dissertation, can be found in a comment by Theodor W. Adorno, who points out that Kant defined the experience of the sublime as the spirit's aesthetic partaking in an overwhelming natural energy (292-293). Within the performance analyses of this dissertation, sublimation is understood as the conscious creation of such sublime experience of the actor's body through aesthetic means.

more and more objects and phenomena of the socio-economic world. What appears as liberated sexuality from the bourgeois point of view, namely the legitimization of polymorphous desires, thus reveals its function as a means for the streamlining of individual and social energies in the service of powerful economic ends. Late modern identity as a matter of style starts to rest on surface attributes and the erotic power expressed by human beings starts to resemble the erotic power expressed in consumer goods.

Furthermore, to the degree that the public display of sexuality has not only got liberated but through advertising has become an integral element within a functioning consumer economy, erotics has turned into an openly free-floating energy, an "unchained signifier capable of being connected semiotically with an almost unlimited number of signified; at the same time it is a signified willing to get represented by any signifier" (Baumann 27). In this context of identity as style and unchained erotics, sexual object relation gains more and more overtly the character of a fetishistic object relation. The new situation is the almost unlimited number of objects available for fetishization, as well as the willingness on the part of late modern human beings to fetishise objects in their stylization of lived reality. Late modern fetishism is not fixed on one specific object that serves as a promise of primordial plenitude, but works as a licence to attach ever new objects to this persistent desiring fantasy. The volatility of desire becomes a hegemonic driving force behind individual identity constructions and social relationships. In this context, to express gender liminality is not necessarily a challenge to the social order of late capitalist Western societies anymore. Liminalities that challenge regulations of economic and social power are still possible and they can include ambiguous gender performances – the most controversial being at the moment

the muslim women within Western societies wearing a head scarf as an act of defiant self-identification – but they hardly focus on erotic contents.

In its volatility of desire, late modern identity is not necessarily an overcoming of the phallocentric order, but rather its rearrangement along a new axis. For if the phallus as a fantasised source of plenitude and power was ultimately linked in a modern context to the supremacy of men,[61] this phallus gets unchained from masculinity and circulates as a fantasy object through the market of consumer goods and personal properties.[62] It is no longer men who are naturally at the center of that phallocratic order and its subject, but those human beings who reveal in their self-fashioning that they have access to these properties and manage to invest themselves with signs that can serve as powerful erotic fetishes. If modern identity is based on a rational metaphysics of substance, late modern identity is based on an erotic metaphysics of stylization.

Senelick's wary conclusions at the end of his seminal study of cross-dressing in the performative arts complement these socio-psychological considerations. He not only warns that contemporary "drag queens are in danger of becoming the queer equivalent of the birthday party clown" (505), but also roots part of their fascination for mainstream audiences in

> the human wish to escape the inexorable decrees of nature. […] In an inauthentic and fetishistic age saturated by media images, drag, for all its patent inauthenticity, is expressing an authentic desire. Self-creation and self-imaging through dynel wigs and gold lame are a variant of the self-improvement movements. […] The android has replaced the androgyne as ideal. (505)

To return to the central issue of this dissertation, one has good reason, then, to suspect that the growing vogue of all-male (and all-female) dramatic performances displays, among other concerns, the attempt to participate in the increased cultural

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[61] Both Freud and Lacan center the question of the phallocratic order around the interpretation of castration and female lack, either rooting it in biology (Freud) or language (Lacan).
[62] In other words, it circulates as a trivialised form of cultural capital.

capital of erotic bodies on stage. This reading does not mean that public performances of an eroticised body are necessarily subservient to the economic regime of late capitalist society. But it is clear that the ambiguously erotic figure of the cross-dressed actor on stage is not per se a sign subversive of the late bourgeois order. In order to address the reifying elements in late bourgeois identity through a theatrical body politics, performances would have to foreground how this metaphysics of stylization is – as any identity formation – a prison for the variety of psychic impulses. If all-male productions manage to bring about not only kinky moments of stylised eroticism, but also the human, emotional and social investments in the cross-dressed figure, they can make human beings visible as a moment of resistance to the economic imperative of stylization. In doing so, they will queer the desublimated stylised identity.

2.2.3 Postbourgeois Subjectivity: Performing Queer Identities

An otherwise fairly conventional all-male *Twelfth Night* at the London Globe in 2002 produced one remarkable moment between Orsino and cross-dressed Viola as Cesario. E.C. Fisher describes how in II.4, while listening to Feste sing, they both move continually closer and finally almost kiss. It was not played for laughs but for high-charging emotional tension. And s/he reports Roger Foss's impression that the scene represented "a breathtaking moment of sexual danger when the magnetic attraction between the ardent Orsino and doe-eyed Viola threatens to turn into a steamy homo-erotic clinch" (*What's On*, 29 May 2002, qtd in Fisher 18). The emotional and political thrill of this scene relies on the audience's participation in this ambiguous erotic charge. "If Viola is played by a man, the audience becomes as confused as Orsino and the scene is infused with ambiguity. Orsino is transformed from a man who fails to recognise a woman, to a man who fears his attraction for a man" (Fisher 22). Orsino as a man who

gets confused about his own erotic preferences represents more than an adventurous sensation seeker.[63] Seen as an expression of fear, his reaction highlights that modern personal and social boundaries are threatened to crumble.

The scene, however, allows a different reading, for my impression, gained from watching the production video at the Globe Studies Center in London, was rather that Cesario became overwhelmed by his emotions, foregrounding thus Viola behind his male disfarce. Orsino appears as taking delight in Cesario's emotionality because it offers an opportunity to get consoled and to live out his own erotic fantasy.[64] In this reading, Orsino's desire transgresses modern gender markers, too, but it does so through a kind of depersonalisation of communication as such. The scene reveals a self-infatuated Orsino who takes more interest in his own fantasies than in the real person and partner in front of him. Cesario merely serves as a proxy for Orsino's projections. In addition to Fisher's reading of Orsino's stage action as subversive of bourgeois notions of identity, I would specify this subversion as generating a moment of late bourgeois narcissist desublimation.

The scene is so fascinating, not because it almost turns into a homo-erotic clinch, but because it reveals the predicaments of late modern *and* postmodern transgressions of modern gender and eroticism. In my reading, Orsino sticks to the phantasma of autonomy in bourgeois subjectivity, since he insists on the convenient power of projective fantasies over lived reality. Viola-as-Cesario, on the contrary, is aware of the personal and social limitations within her/his ambiguous gender identity. What's more, as a stage figure, s/he acknowledges a split between the socially normalised existence as

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[63] Given our knowledge of pre-modern sexual norms, this is a scene in line with the Globe's plea for authenticity, although it stretches the moral licence for a company that also plays to school groups.

[64] In the video, the two actually kiss. Cesario protests and leaves almost aghast, whereas Orsino profusely affirms his passion for Olivia, completely disregarding Cesario as the person to whom he acted passionately. If anything, it revealed Orsino's narcissist revelling in his own feelings.

Cesario and her inner feelings and desires as Viola, which shall not be overcome throughout the action. Even after Cesario's coming out as Viola at the end of the play, s/he is doomed to remain in male attire. Orsino's wish to see Cesario in female attire is not only thwarted by the dramaturgic confusions in which Malvolio has disappeared with the keys for the wardrobe, it is also marked ironically by a male actor. In short, in an all-male performance, Viola-as-Cesario puts on stage an incongruous, ambiguous identity which presents a call for recognition that cannot get fully answered within modern and late modern notions of subjectivity, as presented by Orsino. Given Viola-as-Cesario's theatrical incongruency and her/his concomitant problematic fate as character in love, one may ask under which philosophical and socio-political conditions such ambiguous identity could find a positive response? This leads furthermore, as I already asked in the Introduction, to the question of how these conditions can get realised on the contemporary all-male Shakespearean stage.

From a communicative point of view, Viola's tragedy derives from Orsino's uncapability to acknowledge her in the ambiguous appearances she expresses. Orsino insists on the prevalence of his desires and unifying projections over Viola's multi-faceted reality. To cherish such variety in Viola, Orsino would have to give up this mechanism. To do so, however, he would have to give up modern presuppositions regarding identity and morality.

From a structural point of view, Viola's emotional pain and excitement in crossdressing, the combination of acknowledging the formative power of social norms and a tactical rebellion against these norms, comes close to embodying the foundational scenario of non-bourgeois subjectivity as layed out by Judith Butler:

> If the subject is produced through foreclosure, then the subject is produced by a condition from which it is, by definition, separated and differentiated. Desire will aim at unraveling the subject, but be thwarted by precisely the subject in whose name it operates. A vexation of desire, one that proves crucial to subjection,

> implies that for the subject to persist, the subject must thwart its own desire. And for desire to triumph, the subject must be threatened with dissolution. A subject turned against itself (its desire) appears, on this model, to be a condition of the persistence of the subject. (*Psychic* 9)

What Butler calls here foreclosure, in other contexts she calls the phantasmagoric unification of identity and explains it as an effect of the abjection or total repression of those internal impulses that manifest socially deviant forms of identity. Viewed like that, the inner life of a subject would always oscillate between what manifested identity as that which counts as socially normal and the variety of inner impulses that fundamentally exceed any social normativity.

To acknowledge this split as the ground of one's being clearly marks a step beyond bourgeois identity. Identity, we can conclude from Butler's formulation, is then best seen as the specific form a human being gives to the dialectical conflict between formative prohibition and dissolving transgressions. On the grounds of this obversation, we can state that the post-bourgeois subject exists as a liminal structure, a split phenomenon, where impulses towards oppression and complicity meet with impulses towards liberation and subversion without allowing a teleological utopian or dystopian horizon.[65] A performance of identity that reveals an awareness of these insights and takes them as its starting point can be appropriately called postbourgeois or postmodern, since it does not cherish the utopia of self's inner unity or substantive identity, nor of its autonomy (be it as masterful unity or decontextualised fragment). Cross-dressing in Shakespeare's plays fits into this scheme, since it does not overcome completely the rationale of patriarchal societies, but it allows the cross-dressed figures to distance themselves from the patriarchal system and make it work for themselves, while it allows

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[65] If there is an essentialism or a quasi metaphysical foundation in a postbourgeois subject informed by Butler's construction of the human being, it can be constructed as the contradictory (at best dialogic) existence of these two impulses: stability and transgression, power and desire. But there is no horizon of either overcoming domination and stability or the impulse towards transgression.

them to express clear insights into the emotional price they have to pay for such subversion of normative identities.

Butler develops her concept of the performative construction of identity on the basis of these inner contradictions. She recurs on an understanding of performativity that does not presuppose an autonomous subject at its origin, but a dialectic interacting between a powerful law and a subject that reiterates, i.e., cites this law without ever fulfilling it completely – due to the transgressive impulses as constitutive of the subject as the existence of the law. This citation of the law can get compared to a dramatic performance in so far as the actors' acting will play the scene as roughly composed by the director, but in doing so, they may considerably change the scene over time. Only that in Butler's understanding, the place of the director, the place of the performative law cannot get represented fully by an individual, since it represents itself a set of social regulations.

From the point of view of the individual subject, the provisional success of this powerful performative pattern is experienced as a tension between subjection (i.e. commodification of the psyche in the form of: *I am a. I am b,* with a and b ultimately understandable as social norms) and a desire for productive transgression, what we could call "citational variation", a transformative rewriting of received formative psychic patterns.[66] Instead of covering over the constitutive convention of identity formation, citational variation is meant to bring into relief the norms according to which subjects are granted legitimacy, i.e., the socio-psychological mechanisms of foreclosure, of abjection (the citational aspect), while simultaneously shifting these norms through a

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[66] As a mode of dynamic rewriting, citational rewriting corresponds with Dollimore's concept of "transgressive reinscriptions", laid out in his *Sexual Dissidence,* as interventions into a hegemonic matrix that do not oppose this matrix from the outside, but expose the conceptual cracks and contradictions from the inside and succeed in partly reworking its modes of producing meaning. In doing so, they turn intelligible ways of living that were formerly unconceivable and socially stigmatised.

performance of bodies and practices that displaces those signs that validate this norm (the variational effect). Although citational variation works with the signs of patriarchal bourgeois order, it uses these signs consciously as signifiers of a deviant social practice in order to produce an individual variation. Therefore it stands closer to mimicry than to mimesis, and as far as gender is concerned, to effects such as travesty or the grotesque.

Butler is careful to make clear that the subject cannot get back or beyond the moment of its construction/subjection. It is not her intention to theorise the overcoming of identity and psychic pain as such, but to open a space where the subject can negotiate different forms of social norms and psychic desires; where he or she can follow the human need and possibility to risk one's "social existence"[67] and "begin to imagine the contingency of that [social] organization, and performatively reconfigure the contours of the conditions of life" (*Psychic Life* 29), beyond hegemonic constructions of modern and late modern heterosexual identities. But this reconfiguration as an ongoing project also implies a refusal to essentialise gay or lesbian identities. On the contrary, Butler's proposal to understand identity as such performative reiteration of individual practice that negotiates between received and internalised social affirmation of one's identity and deviant psychic impulses as to expand the realm of feasible lifestyles goes for any human being, irrespective of sexual orientation and gender manifestation. Moreover, gender and sexual orientation are only one realm of individual practices in which such negotiation takes place.

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[67] Butler is clear-sighted enough to acknowledge that this moment of risking one's social identity is marked by the danger of getting lost in almost psychotic experiences that constitute at best moments of revolt, but not subversive strategies. It is her insistence on the *political* effectiveness of subversion that makes her refute concepts that produce subversive counter-inscriptions as a utopian sphere "*prior* to the imposition of a law [or] *after* its overthrow […]" (*Gender Trouble* 29). These concepts instigate a desire which they can only fulfill under psychotic conditions. That is the reason why Butler takes issue with cultural practices such as Kristeva's defence of poetic language, if they conceive themselves as a utopian counter-discourse originated in a sphere beyond the subject and able to take the subject to this sphere beyond its own mode of existence.

Butler's citational subject is aware of its own identity as an ultimately hybrid and inconclusive one. Criticism in cultural studies has coined the term *queer* to denote hybrid gender identities. This term is often related to homosexuality and an aesthetics associated with gay artists and lifestyle. Within the context of this dissertation, however, I do not confine the term *queer* to a specific sexual orientation. For it is not, as Butler presupposes and Moe Meyer explains, necessarily a homosexual discourse:

> Because sexual behaviour is clearly not the determining factor in finalizing a self-nomination, […] queerness contains the knowledge that social identities, including those of sex, but especially those of gender, are always accompanied by some sort of public signification in the form of specific enactments, embodiments, or speech acts which are nonsexual, or, in the very least, extrasexual. (3)

Since sexuality, as Meyer and others affirm, is no longer of essential importance for an individual's self-nomination, he rejects the association of queerness (as a semiotic practice) with a specific sexual object choice:

> As the rejection of a social identity based upon the differentiation of sexual practices, queer identity must be more correctly aligned with various gender, rather than sexual, identities because it is no longer based, and does not have to be, upon material sexual practice. (3-4)

As a notion of hybrid, always unconclusive self-fashioning, Meyer advocates a concept of the queer self "as performative, improvisational, discontinuous, and processually constituted by repetitive and stylized acts" (3).[68]

However, to avoid a liberal understanding of descriptions such as Meyer's, it is important to recall Butler's affirmation "that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (*Gender Trouble* 25). As semiotic signs, the meanings and rules of this performance together with the norms of what counts as a legitimate or successful performance (of gender, a specific class, nation,

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[68] Eve Sedgwick gives a similar description of queerness. Queerness, according to her, "refer[s] to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't* be made)

etc.) are not controlled by an individual that could claim a position beyond the matrix of the respective category. Gender may serve as an example how these categories mark the human "I" in such a way that "the 'I' neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering but emerges within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves" (*Bodies* 7), and "[t]he activity of this gendering cannot, strictly speaking, be a human act or expression, a willful appropriation, and it is certainly *not* a question of taking on a mask; it is the matrix through which all willing first becomes possible, its enabling cultural condition. In this sense, the matrix of gender relations is prior to the emergence of the 'human'" (*Bodies*, 7). Hence, the fixation of gendered identity is brought about by the reiterative submission of the subject to a publicly regulated fantasy:

> That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggests that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy […]. (*Trouble* 136)

A renegotiation of that interiority would necessarily foreground these public regulations. In so far as queer identity formation acknowledges the openness and impurity of identities as well as their embeddedness in a socio-political matrix, it would structurally pose a threat to any social organization that is built on exclusion and fixed power structures.

To say that a category is prior to an individual's identity is not the same as saying that it completely defines this human being. Therefore, although gender still functions as a symbolic tool to maintain exclusion and separation, it also can be used as a tool to mark out an arena of negotiation, of conflict and subversion. As something prior to the emergence of the individual "human," gender is not of the individual's essence, but of the social's essence.

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to signify monolithically" (Sedgwick 8, qtd. in Glover and Kaplan 106). Hence, queerness is not a utopian

How does the queer understanding of identity reconfigure the social sphere? How may people who refrain from projecting unifying fantasies onto themselves and each other organise their interactions and social space? Within a post-bourgeois context of citational variation, gender is just one example of how categories that were formerly used with a solely exclusionary goal are now understood as a means to sketch out a contact zone between opposites. Gender markers used in a queer mode as described by Meyer and Butler attempt to confound norms that confer exclusive legitimacy on some and impose punishment on other forms of human identity. Under such conditions, the process of self-formation cannot be conceived as a way towards the realization of a fixed truth within the subject, much less as its mere adaptation to socio-economic pressures, but rather as a constant exploration of the subject's dependencies, its conceptual and emotional limitations, and their subsequent transformation into possible contexts for manifestations of dissenting individuality. Such non-exclusionary reworking of publicly regulated fantasies is the outward expression of the subject's inner impulse towards transgressing its fixed identity within an avowedly hybrid context. Consequently, Butler wonders whether "only by risking the *incoherence* of identity is connection possible" (*Psychic* 149). The socio-political consequences of the promulgation of such hybrid, queer identities call for a recognition of the other in me and revive the idea of a fundamental connectedness of all human beings. This connectedness differs from the field of norms and values that is usually called "a common ground", since it a) necessarily has to remain undefined and b) can only be constructed through the concrete interaction of human beings in face of inequality in human relations.

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structure in the traditional, harmonised sense.

Since queer identity is not necessarily focused on issues of gender and sexuality, but rather on the question of overcoming unifying and socially decontextualizing projections of human identity, the amount of transgressive, interventional energy that an all-male dramatic performance can mobilise is generated not only by the way such performance encodes gender and sexuality, but even more by how it aligns the respective signs with other theatrical signs to foreground and criticise such modern and late modern projections of individual and social identity. If the openly theatrical construction of identity on the all-male stage can undermine modern notions of identity, it needs to foreground the social embeddedness of such hybrid identities to avoid the pitfall of late modern androgynous escapism.

It is a sign of such queer negotiation of identity on the theatrical stage, when in Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*, after the marriage, Orlando hands over to Rosalind his decoration received out of the hands of the Duke as his father-in-law, and then, famously, engages in a tango, in which leading positions are constantly altered. Declan Donnellan makes clear that it is this negotiation that matters, and not a person's sexual object choice, when he pairs up Jaques with the counter-tenor singer Amiens and lets the couple step in the dance. In this moment, the all-male cast works as to background sex and gender based on specific signs in favour of an emphasis on social practice. As I shall describe in chapter 4, Donnellan's production frames gender signs in such a way as to indicate human identity as both hybrid and socially contextualised. Hence, it constructs identity not only beyond modern, but also late modern concepts of gender. In doing so, it works towards the creation of an empathy for non-hegemonic lifestyles as the expression not of an unintelligible and illegitimate other (there is no other anymore) but of a mere stranger, according to the Jewish proverb cited by Butler: "Welcome the stranger in your midst" (*Foundations* 3).

2.3 All-Male Shakespearean Theater as Theatrical Aesthetics Beyond Bourgeois and Late Bourgeois Patriarchalism

In the initial press-conference announcing an all-male *Antony and Cleopatra* for the Globe Theatre London, Mark Rylance stressed modern cultural significations and anxieties concerning the cross-cast actor on stage. In a jocular way, he linked all-male performances with homosexual innuendos. He not only declared that he was a very choosy actor and that his Antony would have to have good breath; he simultaneously expressed the hope that he would "find a consenting adult over the age of 16" (*The Times*, 28 Jan 99) for the role. Both remarks acknowledged and subsequently deflected homoerotic anxieties towards a good publicitiy gag. Yet, since Rylance conceived Cleopatra as a traditional "Venusian character opposite the Apollo world of men" (*The Independen*t, 28 Jan 99), the provocative calling upon deviant masculinity and its social contexts had little substance, and the production ended up with male actors disappearing behind conventional female characters.

If this particular all-male production throws some doubts on the alleged effect of all-male dramatic performances to highlight the social construction of gender, the already cited Globe's *Twelfth Night* and Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* revealed, at least for some moments, that the cross-dressed human body in contemporary Shakespearean theatre can get invested with erotic energies and ambiguous gender markers that may reveal all-male performances as a means to undermine both modern images of masculine and feminine identity as well as late modern images of a socially decontextualised protean identity that easily crosses gender boundaries.

To understand this ambiguity in all-male Shakespearean performances, their potentials and dangers as a conscious body politics beyond bourgeois and late bourgeois

identity formations, Judith Butler's contentions on drag as a socially disruptive performance provide a good starting point. Inspired by Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* and her synecdochal identification of the body with the social system, Butler conceives first the imaginary, discoursive "boundaries of the body as the limits of the socially hegemonic" (*Gender Trouble* 131). A redefinition of these body boundaries could then possibly press towards a reconfiguration of the cultural and social space, or at least challenge the principles by which these two spaces are being organised. That is why the presentation of body images on stage gains such a central position within subversive sexual politics.

As we saw in section 2.2.3, Butler is wary of utopian promises in sexual politics. If no complete deregulation of language (into Kristeva's 'Semiotic') and the body (into a polymorphous plenitude) is possible, then the cultural practice that best serves a subversive identity politics would be to cite hegemonic identity conventions in such a way that images of bodies and verbal figures are produced ("spawned") that render foundational structures only temporarily possible and gender as a dichotomously fixed category permanently problematic. Consequently, Butler posits this citation as a performance in which "the culturally constructed body will […] be liberated, neither to its 'natural' past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities" (*Trouble* 93), which means that such performances would manage to re-mould social regulations on the body. This citation would not open a space of complete liberty, but first of all would represent a possibility for negotiations that remain foreclosed under strict heterosexual hegemony and its imperative for gender coherence. The opened cultural possibilities would signify a re-negotiation of public regulations on how to fantasise the human being and its relation to the body. The herein presented and desired body is not the the anatomical, naked body, but a fantasised body made out of

physical attributes and cultural investments, whose power does not reside only in specific eroticised parts, but in its theatrical capacity to produce fantasies that exceed hegemonic body and gender images (71) without forming a sexual or gender utopia in themselves. Butler turns to drag impersonations in general as examples of such de-naturalizing performances:

> In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself–as well as its contingency. […] In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance which avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated unity. (137-8)

For Butler, such cross-dressed performances show not only how identity relies on material signs such as vocabulary, intonation, gestures, body language, and clothes, but in doing so mimic their constructions and "displace the entire enactment of gender significations from the discourse of truth and falsity" (137). Instead, such performances shift the question of true gender away from natural law into the realm of politics.[69] According to Butler, drag achieves this displacement through a parodic treatment of hegemonic gender, which reveals the enactment of gender as always imitating fantasised "original" gender impersonations. In terms of theatrical representation, cross-dressed performances constitute acts of mimicry, and not mimesis.

Although Butler states clearly that mimicry means to draw parodically on received notions of what social and sexual roles in Western culture should be like, formulations like the one how their "perpetual displacement constitut[es] a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization" (138), run the risk of invoking an affirmative moment of gender politics in which the critical

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[69] Butler is a bit elusive as to what extent such denaturalizing performances are the result of deliberate cultural actions or of actions that express and take advantage of almost spontaneous, self-destructive developments within hegemonic conventions. See her statement that "if subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself" (*Trouble* 93). These permutations are clearly

category is turned into a utopian program. In doing so, gender takes on the quality of an arbitrary mask at the individual's free disposal. In fact, as we saw in 2.2.2, there is a clear tendency within late modern capitalism to suggest that gender difference is already acknowledged and free to get employed by human beings in their individual self-fashioning. Giddens, recalling the class bias in this hedonist utopia, marks a parodic gender mimicry in itself not as a performance of social resistance, but as one of social conformism to economic power structures. It makes a difference, whether cross-dressing and drag are performed by people embedded in the culturally hegemonic structures, or by those who remain by economic and symbolic force excluded from these structures. Butler's description of drag as mimicry is useful, but we should ask if gender mimicry in cross-dressed performances is co-extensive with a mimicry of social power relations on stage.

Despite a stage practice that separates traditional drag performances from all-male Shakespearean dramatic performance, they share at least one common structural feature, namely a performer-character relation which gets constantly alluded to and covered up. The mimicry depends on the awareness of that tension. To do so, the actor/performer does not completely impersonate the character, but plays with it, too. Although drag may use this kind of play to highlight what Butler calls the cultural mechanisms of fabricating gender unity, it may use the gap between sex and gender to call up homoerotic pleasures and anxieties without exploring their relation to social power structures.

Hence, the problem for a politically subversive drag performance consists in a contemporary context that does not take gender artificiality as a necessarily distancing and possibly transgressive force anymore. Drag performances, which reproduce the

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not the result of a deliberate opposition from a place outside the hegemonic conventions that could claim

notion of woman as queen, can citationally mimic traditional bourgeois gender ideals without calling into question the social regulations that accompany the fascination with such figure.

However, if one asks about the possibilities to call upon social power structures, the narrative of Shakespeare's plays so clearly imbued with patriarchal and economic power constitutes an advantage of all-male dramatic Shakespeare performances over drag shows, when it comes to keeping the audience aware of the socio-political context that surrounds the characters. On the Shakespearean stage, the cross-dressed figure is never only an ambiguous theatrical sign, but also a socially contextualised character. Cross-dressing within a narrative can stress the social dimension of drag and complicate the voluntarist blurring of gendered identity as the assemblage of various contradictory masques much more than the cross-cast actor's ambiguous visibility and presence can do.

The potential of all-male dramatic performances to undermine bourgeois substantive identity as well as its implicit dangers to reify gender as a merely aesthetic quality in a socially decontextualised erotic play call for a double focus when analysing these performances in general and Shakespearean productions in particular, namely which dramatic methods are available on stage that enable all-male dramatic performances a) to destabilise the dominant bourgeois and late bourgeois construction of identity (the epistemological question) and b) to foreground concomitant dominant social practices and displace them (the question of social agency). The first part of the critical assessment involves the presentation of the gendered body on stage as an unstable body with no naturally fixed gender boundaries, a wondrous site for the flight of imagination; as such, it could get described technically as a fictitious hybrid body

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a status of truth.

where the cultural limits between male and female are being semiotically blurred. The second part points to what Butler calls "displacing repetition" of dominant social practices, but also to a performance of marginalised social practices in their relation to hegemonic ones. Only both aspects together would constitute a performance beyond traditional bourgeois and late bourgeois aesthetic and socio-political contexts.

The most simple means that contemporary all-male performances use to present a performatically constructed hybrid body is "cross-casting." Before I discuss the relation of the contemporary cross-dressed male actor to the various sex-gender-systems in circulation at present, I want to recall that such actor, as David McCandless put it, also enforces "a female 'lack' […]. If, in contemporary performance, the female body itself offers a source of resistance to phallocentric erasure, that possibility is clearly precluded when the body encarnating […] female characters is not female" (12). Isabella's silence at the end of *Measure for Measure*, when played by a female actor, may convey an acuter awareness of patriarchal power than if played by a male actor in female dress. The critical power of the female body on stage indicates that the actor's body and sex may not get completely textualised and dissolved into the theatrical signs of its performance. It remains a challenge for any production, be it mixed-cast or same-sex cast, to use the actor's body in such a way that the workings of social norms on the character's actions become transparent and the character's theatrical body a subversive tool.[70] To avoid such male supremacy on the all-male stage, not only femininity but also

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[70] A similar anti-essentializing and socially subversive effect can be achieved in a self-conscious all-female production, as in Martin Meltke's all-female *Twelfth Night* at the Gorki Theatre Berlin in 1992. Similar to the Globe in London, the original reason to stage an all-female performance was not aesthetic, but a matter of using the cast available. But Meltke used the artificiality in his casting to highlight men's behaviour and communication as a power game, a well-known and worn-out ritual with little seductive energy left. The result was a highly funny and seductive performance. Something similar seemed to have taken place in Phyllida Lloyd's *Taming of the Shrew* at the London Globe in 2003, which hilariously "highlight[ed] the absurdities of the male of the species without any need of overt editorialising" (Spencer, *Gender Bending*). It could do so, since the all-female cast blocked all accusations of misogyny from the outset, so that the misogyny in the playtext could be played "authentically" to the extreme. On

masculinity should be de-familiarised, exposed as social posing and as such brought in tension with the social conventions on gender roles, if the goal is to promote a queer theatrical universe that thwarts bourgeois or late bourgeois identification.

Female gender in the contemporary cross-cast all-male stagings is a matter of culturally coded performance (gestures, body language, whigs, clothes), not authenticated and naturalised by the female sex of an actress.[71] But, as the all-male productions at the Globe Theatre show, a male actor may impersonate a female character to such perfection that almost no critical, estranging citation of hegemonic conventions is actualised. Against the contention on the importance of the actor's body, voiced in the paragraph before, this effect clearly indicates to what extent contemporary spectators are willing to suspend their knowledge and see the female characters through the eyes of the other male characters. Without some metatheatrical awareness that foregrounds the difference between actor and character – sometimes for laughs or erotic titillation, but most notably for socio-political intentions – all-male productions (and all-female ones as well) will hardly suggest the kind of subversive imitation Butler is thinking of.

That is not to say that this identification with the character in the theatrical narrative is altogether a counterproductive activity on the part of the audience when it comes to producing subversive effects. On the contrary, as I will argue later on, some kind of emotional identification is necessary to lure spectators into a subversive engagement with established sex-gender relations. What seems also necessary to that

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the other hand, the Globe's aforementioned all-female productions *Richard III* in 2003 and *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2004 released little subversive energy, since they not only erased the female body behind the character almost completely, but also (and consequently) since they did not manage to give the same-sex casting any specific social or psychic significance.

[71] For an essentializing effect of cross-casting in Shakespeare's drama see Woodbridge (154): "Transvestite disguise in Shakespeare does not blur the distinction between the sexes but heightens it." Woodbrigde suppresses all textual elements that expose the artificiality of gender roles in *As You Like It*

end, however, are those revelatory moments, when audience members suddenly perceive their suspension of disbelief and become aware of the contradictory gender investment in the character.

This revelatory awakening can be achieved, if at all, when the spectators suddenly perceive the distance between the identity of the theatrical figure on stage and the normative identity regulations of their own lived reality. These are moments in which the theatricality on stage underlines the theatricality of social performances off stage. In Butler's thought, moments in which the overt theatrical imitation of gender on stage reveals the imitative theatricality of gender off stage. The narrative of a Shakespearean comedy such as *As You Like It* works itself towards that end, when the male actor playing the female heroine disguises as a young man. The male actor must behave and speak like a woman who represents a man. In these theatrical gender projections, the actor's physical male body no longer serves as an authenticating instance for biology-based masculinity and male identity. Although the audience remains aware that it is a man playing a woman, the suggestive effect is that it becomes increasingly unsure of what it means to "be" a wo/man and to enact "truly" a wo/man. Another instance exists when verbal metatheatrical elements produce an aesthetic alienation by breaking the theatrical illusion of femininity and pointing at the male actor beneath.[72] Both narrative structure and verbal metatheatricality make gender evident as an act that mimics established conceptions of gender and de-naturalise them by drawing critical attention to the socio-ideological context that authenticates them. To do so, both first draw on mimetic understandings and subsequently subvert them.

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as well as those that expose male and female behaviour as parallel. For instance, both Rosalind and Orlando faint at the sight of blood (IV.3).

[72] In *As You Like It*, one may think of the jokes on beards, physical height and leathered skin as well as the bawdy puns. For an analysis of the playtext of *As You Like It* as regards allusions to the boy player, see especially Dusinberre ("Women and Boys").

Michael Shapiro (52, 64) coined the term "theatrical vibrancy" (a concept to which I shall later resort) to describe this contradictory gender blurring within a theatrical figure's stage appearance that brings about the interplay of mimicry and mimesis. The complexity of theatrical, erotic, and normative effects of all-male performances are linked to a large extent to this effect. However, Shapiro captures with his term merely the structural unstability of the cross-cast actor on stage, not its political dimensin as an imitative subversion of received gender notions. If one wants to analyse the socio-political and erotic implication in this theatrically produced unstable identity structure, one must resort to concepts such as citational variation. Nevertheless, as we shall see in the performance analyses, a cross-cast character is unable to produce an effect that deserves to be termed as subversive citation without having produced an awareness of her/his simultaneous existence as a masculine and feminine stage presence, i.e., without having exploited the phenomenon of theatrical vibrancy.

Technically speaking, this puzzling complexity in the character's identity depends on what Shapiro calls a combination of "cross-gender casting" (when actors are impersonating a character of the other sex) and "cross-gender disguise" (referring to a character who is wearing clothes belonging to the other sex), although cross-gender casting alone can produce with the help of metatheatrical comments in the playtext a contradictorily gendered theatrical figure on stage. Cross-gender disguise is invariably undone at the end of the plot, when the disguised character reveals his or her "true" fictional sex. Cross-gender casting may be highlighted, for example, through metatheatrical comments in the playtext on the male actor's physical features, but it is usually not undone.

Zimmermann lists a number of “strategies for interrupting and displacing dramatic fictions” (47) on stage and for negotiating this gender unstability as produced by cross-gender casting and cross-gender disguise:

> References, implicit or explicit, to the body beneath that of the actor’s impersonation (including scenes of broad, bawdy humour); excessive attention to the age, beauty and apparel of the cross-dressed boy, and especially to the complex sexual appeal of boy actors twice cross-dressed; ostentatious kissing and embracing; attenuated scenes of primarily sexual interest (such as bedroom scenes); and meta-theatric commentary on theatrical artifice, particularly ‘send-up’ of the transvestite convention itself. (47)

By taking advantage of these devices all-male dramatic productions direct the audience’s attention to the simultaneous presence of contradictory layers of identity and can produce a difficulty to decide "[w]hich, or how many, of the several gender identities embodied in any one figure are in play at any one time” (Dollimore, 65).

Theatrical vibrancy then is an equivalent dramatic term to what Stephen Greenblatt has described as the verbal fictionalization of “chafing” (88-9) in Shakespeare’s comedies. Its erotic implications are functional, as Greenblatt has shown, within a society which assumes that playful arousal is central for procreation, but not within the bourgeois society that separated wanton playfulness and procreation. With erotic desublimation as a politically repressive but economically productive strategy in late capitalist societies, imaginary chafing through the public display of erotically ambiguous bodies on stage gains a renewed functionality.

But metatheatrical commentaries and “send-ups” in Shakespearean playtext’s are usually more than mere erotic play. They present the character on stage as far more complex than received concepts of bourgeois mimesis would admit and consequently question the validity of bourgeois norms that regulate femininity and masculinity. By foregrounding the theatrical reality, these comments disrupt the bourgeois notion of illusionist mimesis and its implications on acting as embodying the qualities of a

character.[73] The stage figure of Rosalind plus Rosalind-as-Ganymede plus Rosalind-as-Ganymede-as-Rosalind, together with a possibly male body beneath the theatrical figure, represents an identity that does not fulfill notions of inner coherence. The various and unstable theatrical roles of a figure on stage work against stable judgements about what can count as truth and morality.

An example little commented upon in *As You Like It* is Touchstone's imitation of Orlando's verse-making. It not only plays on the male figure both covering Rosalind (Ganymede, who Orlando is first to find) and existing behind her (the male actor), it also confuses the social status of Rosalind by associating her with whoring. "If the cat will after kind/ So be sure will Rosalind. […] He that sweetest rose will find, Must find love's prick, and Rosalind" (III.2.101-102, 109-110). Furthermore, he subverts the validity of his own statement when he compares his verses with Orlando's as "this is the very false gallop of verses" (111). The epistemological contradictions are co-extensive with contradictory moral judgements. Focusing on the dubious epistemological status of the theatrical figure throws doubts not only on the validity but also the morality of what this figure has just said or is going to say on stage. If the production is willing to explore Touchstone's hint at the gap between actor as impersonator and actor as a mere player of a script, i.e., to highlight the interplay of actor and theatrical figure, then not only an obviously theatrical figure like Ganymede becomes "falser than vows made in wine" (III.5.73), but also an enchanting character like Rosalind, since she reveals how much of her purportedly inner qualities are also hints towards the theatrical workings of the male actor behind.[74] The actor behind Rosalind and Ganymede takes on the quality of a

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[73] Leslie Anne Soule especially described how a focus on the boy-actor in performance works to disrupt the notion of Rosalind as an ideal woman and indirectly debunks the underlying assumptions on illusionist mimesis.

[74] For instance, Rosalind's first sentence in I.2 starts with "I show", and her first proposal is to fall in love as if it were a kind of role-playing.

trickster, and the character oscillates between benign, charming lecturing and almost demonic mischief.[75] A figure endowed with theatrical vibrancy, then, exposes a thoroughly theatricalised identity, whose gender is only temporarily fixed as male or female, and throughout the course of the dramatic performance possibly not fixed at all. Theatrical vibrancy complicates audience identification with a character, but it does not render it impossible. Rather, it challenges the audience to engage either in a complex, shifting form of identification, or the awareness of the provisionality of every identity layer produces a distancing effect and may change the balance between empathy and analysis sometimes in favour of the first, sometimes in favour of the latter.

If the actor's stage persona is firmly present, he creates a theatrical figure whose dynamic instability between the various layers of identity works against a reception of this theatrical complexity as presenting a balanced androgyny. It is clear that theatrical vibrancy subverts a stage presentation of bourgeois identity as regards both femininity and masculinity, for neither charming nor submissive femininity, neither rationally unified nor disciplined masculinity is being produced. As a semiotic practice, cross-gender casting and cross-gender disguise undermine the modern bourgeois model of substantive identity based on abjection and repudiation of the gendered other and become instead, as Bruce Smith affirms, "a particularly volatile symbol of liminality" (*Desire* 153).[76]

Exactly this quality turns the cross-dressed character into an excellent opportunity for entertainment within late bourgeois and post-bourgeois contexts, where s/he can play on a cultural discourse that does not punish heterogeneous or ambiguous identities, neither in terms of gender nor sexuality. This is a good example of how each period shapes itself a Rosalind that it can use for identificatory admiration and desire.

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[75] Most obviously in the ranting on women in IV.1.

Once this was Rosalind as an embodiment of ideal Victorian womanhood, now as an erotically ambiguous stage figure.[77] No wonder that some contemporary critics identified Orlando's hesitation in Cheek by Jowl's production to accept Rosalind as wife not as motivated by a sense of betrayal but deception. The fantasy-figure of Rosalind, cross-dressed as Ganymede, was more fascinating than the stage figure "fulfilling" conventional notions of femininity.[78] And this insight caused no further moral stir. Arguably, it expressed a latent desire in the audience.

Hence, the hybrid cross-dressed figure alone hardly mobilises images of social subversion or resistance. Both within our late captalist society and the narrative of Shakespearean comedies, the delight in theatricality and artificial identities may well cover up on-going power relations. With the cross-dressing undone and the erotics consumed, productions must find other means to draw attention to the fact that power stays on beyond the play's narrative and in the lived reality of the audience. All-male productions can still use the cross-cast actor consciously to highlight the conventionality of the remaining femininity; they can also look in the Shakespearean playtext for disruptive formulations; they can add stage business to the scene as to make clear a critical comment on social power relations. If they want to be critical of the truth and pleasures of hybrid identities, they will have to enable, in some way or another, a moment that works against the volatile and shimmering mirth of the dances and marriage rites and makes perceptible for the audience how the polymorphous fun (with

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[76] As soon as the production is perceived as "homosexual", however, this status of liminality is gone.

[77] See Kay Stanton, who reproduces traditional ideal notions of self-fashioning as the result of protean self-transformation: "Rosalind recreates herself as an actor with parts to play in several pageants, splits herself into a variety of characters. Through her disguises she becomes an artist whose mind shapes several identities" (303). But Rosalind does not merely shape, she rather draws on already existing identities as social conventions. Hence, Rosalind turns palpable the usually suppressed social constraints on self-fashioning.

[78] "Orlando really loves Ganymede, articulating his disappointment by actually rejecting the unmasked Rosalind temporarily" (Ian Dodd *Tribune,* 13 Dec 1991, no page available).

polygendered identities and polymorphous erotics) is infused with or artificially shut off from social power regulations.

A fascination with the large variety of erotic effects on the all-male stage seduced critics to base the subversive power of all-male productions on a largely imaginary disruption of modern heterosexual sexuality based on fixed binary object choice. Sedinger contends that "[t]he boy actor, as object of desire and as object of knowledge, challenges the positivist regime of truth and appearance upon which rests the definition of the spectator's sexuality via object choice" (66). In other words, the erotic energy of theatrical vibrancy "empowered its audience to explore, in some measure, the polymorphous disposition that underlies all sexuality" (Zimmerman 47). Peter Stallybrass's fascination as to how in *Othello* the audience's look onto the boy actor's body is directed towards "contradictory fixations (fixations articulated through a fetishistic attention to particular items of clothing, particular parts of the body of an imagined woman, particular parts of an actual boy actor)" ('Transvestism' 65) is motivated by the same interest. In performance, a constant shifting of attention through text and gesture from the clothes to the body beneath, back to the clothes or other prosthetic signs of gendered identity, such as the whig, produces for the audience what Stallybrass calls a "moment of voyeuristic suspense where the staged body prepares to split into the unpinned clothes and the 'body beneath'" ('Transvestism' 72). Yet, this split never happens, and the performance invests into a presentation of the staged body as a transvestite body with no fixed gender identity.[79]

[79] Some contemporary all-male productions successfully cover up this possibility of splitting, such as the all-male productions at the Globe Theater London. They suppress the presence of the actor's body and the concomitant erotic implications. Shapiro also concedes such a unifying effect for the boy-actor on stage (162). As I shall discuss further on, this mimetic quality can provide an effective decoy for subversive citation.

In both Sedinger's and Stallybrass's reading of Shakespeare's cross-dressed male actor, what is desired is not the cross-dressed figure in itself, but what it stands for: a promise of undefinable plenitude, an in-between identity that does not partake with its desires in the limitations and distortions of socially accepted identities. The lure of the transvestite on stage is her/his function to produce a gesture beyond signification.

But if so, the transvestite's appearance and symbolic function always promises more than it can hold in psychic terms, for as a radical "third" beyond any binary identiy,[80] it is not a sign whose referent could be encoded. It serves rather as a psychic entrance door into a sphere of significations and desires that are marked by their volatiliy, since, as Garber holds, "the 'third' is not a concept, but a mode of articulation; a dynamics of possibilities" (25). The third has no place within the symbolic. It conjures up the always unattainable psychic utopia. Structurally speaking, it is a materialised no-thing. From this point of view, both Garber and Stallybrass are right in aligning the cross-dressed body with the fetish, for it insists on an emotional fulfilment, which the fetish marks as simultaneously absent – a fulfilment beyond the object of love – and present, inextricably based on the presence of the object of love.

This means, that the cross-dressed actor marks out an only imaginary sphere of liberation. This promised plenitude can never materialise itself. It is as destabilising concerning existing binary identities as ephemeral in the realisation of its promised satisfaction. Therefore, in the erotic fascination with the transvestite figure, one does not ask for the fulfillment of desire, but rather for a continuation of illusion and illusion-making. What is desired is not an object, but a mode of existence beyond binary structure. This, however, equals the desire for a sphere beyond the symbolic. Butler's

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[80] See Marjorie Garber in her analysis of transvestism in general: "The cultural effect of transvestism is to destabilise all such binaries: not only 'male' and 'female', but also 'gay' and 'straight', and 'sex' and

critique of Kristeva's concept of the Semiotic as a utopian object of desire applies to Garber, Stallybrass and Sedinger, too. Garber herself is aware that transvestism's utopia is unfullfillable: "[I]n political and social terms, in the lives of real people, male and female, straight and gay, there is finally no 'free play of the signifier'. There is play, plenty of play, but ultimately nothing – and especially not sexual lifestyles – is free" (161).

Neither Stallybrass nor Sedinger consider the cross-dressed actor within the narrative of the playtext. They analyse isolated moments of a fictitious performance of a Shakespeare play. Decontextualised of the narrative of a play, the cross-dressed actor cannot reveal how it may produce an erotic vibrancy that effectively undermines the phallocentric order and much less the late bourgeois social order in its repressive use of desublimation. The dream of an abstract psychic freedom negotiated through a polymorphous erotics on stage diverts the attention from the economic hierarchies on whose existence the realisation of such freedom still rests. Her/his erotic power remains, however, a very effective decoy to catch audience attention and engage it emotionally with the play as a form of mere wish-fulfilling entertainment. From this point of view, the Shakespearean cross-dressed actor would confirm Senelick's sceptical view about the possibilities to transfer this imaginary excitement into the lived reality of the audience and make it effective there.

> Although stage-gender types can be located on a gamut running from extreme masculinity to extreme femininity, the individual type is multi-planar: it layers and interfoliates the different signs of gender to destabilize categorical perceptions of male or female. Watching such a figure in action is like looking through a stacked set of photographic plates or film-frames through which a multiplicity of images is superimposed on the eye. Stage-gendered creatures are chimeras which elude the standard taxonomies and offer alternatives to the limited possibilities of lived reality. That these alternatives cannot exist outside the realm of the theatre makes them all the more cogent to the imagination. (11)

'gender'. This is the sense – the radical sense – in which transvestism is a 'third'" (132. Tranvestism, then, represents and validates contradictory appearing as opposed to being.

What is the effect of this strained gap between a theatrical utopia and the lived reality of the audience? Can it be other than momentarily exciting but afterwards demoralizing, in danger of producing melancholic longing? How can such a concept of the cross-dressing on the Shakespearean stage invoke in audience members ideas about subversive acts of self-fashioning that increase their social agency?

As inspiring as these readings are, they miss an important point in the erotics of cross-dressing in Shakespeare's plays. The cross-cast actor and cross-dressed character are always contextualised through the narrative and thus marked by social circumstances. Cross-dressing here is not only a game with contradictory signs, but within the dramatic narrative it stands out also as a matter of social practices, of gaining and negotiating social power on stage as well as bringing it into relief off stage in the lived reality of the audience. It produces not only an abstractly split self that confounds meaning at all, but, as Catherine Belsey puts it, a "point of intersection of a range of discourses, produced and re-produced as the subject occupies a series of places in the signifying system, takes on the multiplicity of meanings language offers" ('Disrupting'188).

How can we retrieve the cross-dressed figure as a political force on the Shakespearean stage within an artistic and political context that takes heterogeneous identities and polymorphous sexualities if not as the norm, then as an acceptable state of being and acting? How can this figure transport not merely a longing for an abstract state of non-definiteness, but direct its transgressive energy towards a transforming politicization of the late bourgeois hedonist, volatile identity, so that our psychic fascination with his/her unstability does not lead into the limbo of liminality, but into new, though necessarily contingent foundations for post-modern communities?

Ultimately, such issues have to be tested in the analyses of all-male productions and the kind of reception they receive. But a few categories and strategies can get formulated that serve as analytical tools. The first category is the crucial difference between text and event. Susan Bordo has formulated a critique of Butler's textualizing treatment of drag that is highly pertinent to the analyses of the cross-dressed actor on the Shakespearean stage.

> [S]o long as we regard the body in drag as an abstract, unsituated linguistic structure, as pure text, we may be convinced by Butler's claim that the gender system is continually being playfully destabilized and subverted from within. But subversion of cultural assumptions (despite the claim of some deconstructionists) is not something that happens *in* a text or *to* a text. It is an event that takes place (or doesn't) in the reading of the text, and Butler does not explore this. She does not locate the text in question (the body in drag) in cultural context (are we watching the individual in a gay club or in the "Donahue" show?), does not consider the possibly different responses of various readers (male or female, young or old, gay or straight?) or the various anxieties that might complicate their readings, does not differentiate between women in male attire and men in female drag (two very different cultural forms, I would argue), and does not consult (or at least does not report on) a single human being's *actual* reaction either to seeing or to enacting drag. (292-3)

Bordo's description implies that a performance text becomes a cultural event only through its workings on the spectators' perception and reception of the theatrical performance. She alerts to the importance of context, be it cultural or individual, to establish a significance for a specific dramatic performance. This context is very often one of resistance to the production's aesthetic and political intentions. The effectiveness of the production as event depends to some extent on how it manages to deal with and overcome this resistance on the part of audience members. A direct oppositional or utopian stance may prove little effective in this respect. The concept of citational variation recalls the theatrical concept of mimicry.

Within a bourgeois context of mimetic expectations concerning character coherence, productions can intensify as much as possible an initially identificatory audience engagement, while subsequently subverting the naturalness of this

engagement. As already pointed out, one means is intermittently to highlight the permanent tension between the staged feminine body and the always fugitive "body beneath". In terms of dramaturgic strategies, it refers to a tension between moments of mimesis and mimicry, so that identification and revelatory shocks, illusionist identity and non-illusionist difference, are both being produced. But the more decisive question is how to infuse these mimicking moments with socio-political relevance (or how to understand them as being infused with socio-political norms).

One possibility is to understand and foreground all-male productions as performances of male projective fantasies, by stressing the actor's male stage figure as an instance that constructs and plays with the female character figure.[81] The male actor's figure on stage becomes a kind of master of ceremony: the authority behind the female impersonation. As such a theatrical figure, his overt stage presence raises questions concerning femininity as a male convention and mere wish-fulfillment of male fantasies that stay repressed in "perfect", convincingly all-male impersonations of female characters. Indeed, the way Shakespearean comedies fuse the traditional ending in marriage with the moment in which cross-dressing is being undone and the male actor's stage figure allowed to "disappear" once again behind the female character openly indicates this re-figuration of femininity and patriarchal power as the product of male wish-fulfillment. In the case of *As You Like It*, the final iconic image of the masque as the fulfillment of romantic heterosexual love is not only ironised through the on-going cross-casting, but also through the epilogue and its separate addressing of women and men. But this ironization also concerns the conventionality of Orlando's and the Duke's masculine identity, who show themselves completely satisfied with

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[81] Soule, who developed an inspiring reading out of the performatic functions of the cross-cast actor behind Rosalind, assumes this actor's figure to be gender neutral or at least of an ambiguous gender, since

Rosalind as the fulfillment of their conventional fantasies about femininity. Ultimately, through non-illusionist theatricality and narrative, both genders as well as the social order are framed by a series of contrived, i.e., openly metatheatrical, effects designed to expose the contrivance, i.e., the lack of a real fundament in these social stabilizations.

In this theatrical tension, it is by no means clear that ultimately the male actor's body suppresses the female character's stage presence. The notion of character does not get dissolved, but rather disrupted and contextualised. In this sense, an all-male performance maintains rudimentary notions of a humanist character as a subject endowed with agency and responsibility. If audience members identify with these ostentatiously problematic and artifical notions of gender and social power in cross-cast theatrical roles, they can do so because the figure on stage still expresses marks of a character. Such theatricalised character still invites and allows the audience to project their own fantasies on it. Since the stage figure, however, does only conjure up this character, its continuous interiority is the product of the spectator's fantasy. Hence, a disrupture of this conjuring through metatheatrical moments also works to disrupt the spectator's fantasies on the character's unity. The disruptive forces (like homosexual innuendos where heterosexuality has been pictured; bawdy character traits where notions of pure womanhood were cherished; social conventions where natural properties where assumed) also challenge the spectator to reconsider the assumption on which his/her projection has rested or continues to rest. The advantage of Shakespeare's dramaturgy is to confront the audience with questions such as whether the all-male performance stages a world in which women exist only as male fantasies; whether the character produced by the cross-cast and cross-dressed actor provides a viable mode of existence and/ or an effective corrective of social gendered hierarchies, and how the

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she posits it as an adolescent. If the actor is a male adult, his status as a symbol of gender liminality

excitements of the cross-dressed figure can get transferred into the hierarchies of lived social reality. Yet, an all-male production can propose these questions only if it takes advantage of the metatheatrical opportunities provided by the combination of all-male cast and playtext.

Theatrical vibrancy as produced by Shakespeare's narrative not only undermines substantive identity but also complicates an idealist reception of gender as a reified attribute at one's disposal. The tension between actor and character, mimicry and mimesis, allows the play to stage the tensions between individual agency and social restraints, between identity as unified personality and discoursive subject position. This tension does not get resolved and the importance of this dramaturgy lies in the presentation of the conflict itself: how can individual variation and social normativity get negotiated, so that the interests of both are satisfied? The scandal for representatives of modern and late modern thought alike, but also the value of Shakespearean dramaturgy for a post-modern approach, lies in the fact that it does not solve this conflict, but rather establishes tensions in such a way as to mark it out symbolically.[82] Mimetic realism ultimately rests on a socially regulated projected fantasy. As such, its formative existence can get acknowledged and its workings deconstructed. The effect is a kind of deconstructive regulation, in which both the individual and society take on a hybrid, unstable structure.

A comparison between this socio-political effect of theatrical vibrancy and Brecht's concept of the *Verfremdungseffekt* provides a helpful, if surprising, analogy. Brecht's concept of the art of acting is also based on a kind of theatrical vibrancy, for in his understanding, the actor is present on stage in a double way – as person and as

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becomes more dubious.

[82] What else lies behind Butler's contention that no utopian frame is thinkable that could overcome the hierarchies of the symbolic, and that subversion must come from within the law?

character: s/he shows the character in his social relations, but does not disappear with his/her body behind the character. The intention to show how a character feels and functions within a given context, instead of merely impersonating the character, motivates Brecht's belief that cross-casting will highlight the character's gender more than same-sex casting would.[83] And similar to Shapiro, Brecht sees the creative power of a theatrical figure in the presence of incongruous layers of identity.[84] In Brecht's understanding, however, incongruity and contradiction have a function, namely to clarify the social forces that work on the character and motivate the various facettes of his/her behaviour. It is the main function of Brecht's "V-effekt," as opposed to traditional forms of *Verfremdung* such as the usage of masques, to bring these social forces out into the open and make them susceptible to a transforming critique. The comparison between Brecht's "V-effect" and theatrical vibrancy allows to understand not only gender as an exterior stereotype and a matter of "posing," but to perceive a character on stage as a socially contextualised figure and his/her social identity equally as an effect of acting. If Brecht agrees with bourgeois aesthetics that theatre should be entertainment and emotionally engaging and interesting (663), he does so because for him the highest pleasure and entertainment obtainable in theatre is the insight in the transformability of the world whose image is presented on stage. Despite some ideological differences, both Brecht and Butler know that since identity implies performing a specific role, human freedom lies in being able to subvert that role and transform the regulations that press towards certain performances and prohibit others.[85]

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[83] "*Von einer Person anderen Geschlechts gespielt, wird die Figur ihr Geschlecht deutlicher verraten*" (689) [If played by someone from the other sex, the character will reveal his/her gender more clearly."]

[84] "*Die Einheit der Figur wird nämlich durch die Art gebildet, in der sich ihre einzelnen Eigenschaften widersprechen*" (686) ["The unity of the character is built up through the way how his/her different characteristics contradict each other."] The comparison, of course, has its limitations, mainly because Brecht is not interested in "mysterious power" but "social power".

[85] Considering the numerous remarks in Brecht's *Organon* that the impulse towards transformation should follow the rational principle of production as an activity whose aim is to gain control and power

Both cross-dressing on the Shakespearean stage and Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* can count as instances of "a deconstructive realism, exploiting rather than ceding the satisfactions of narrative, character, referentiality, and scopic and emotional investment" (McCandless 28). Therefore, it is no intrinsic feature of all-male dramatic performances of Shakespeare's plays to proclaim the death of character, narrative, and hence meaningful community. Rather, such performances intrinsically queer both by exposing how they are constructed out of contradictory, psychologically and socially incongruous qualities and discourses. They exploit these contradictions, then, to increase audience engagement.

Alisa Solomon is right to state that the cross-dressed figure in Shakespearean theatre calls for active spectators. But the playtext together with cross-casting calls upon the spectators not only imaginatively as those who suspend their disbelief and turn mimicry into mimesis, but also as the ones who are suspended between belief and disbelief. To produce theatrical vibrancy, and in its wake the kind of deconstructive realism McCandless is speaking of, implies to activate conventionalised notions of character, naturalised fantasies on gender, while a split-second later, undermining them as mere theatrical set ups. The same goes for the forms of social order as played out on stage. The active spectator is as emotionally and imaginatively engaged as s/he is critically distanced from the action on stage. This deconstructive realism produces a socio-political vibrancy that calls upon an acknowledgement of social conventions and simultaneously calls for their displacement.

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over one's conditions of living, one perceives his tendency to fall into a normative approach that definitely exists outside Butler's theoretical conception. Yet, in his dramatic texts, Brecht presents himself much less omniscient than in some moments of his *Organon*. His strength is clearly to find theatrical solution for the problem of how to present a character's social agency and produce an impulse in his productions towards social transformation. Although he reveals the wish to control this process from a Marxist and especially rational standpoint, in his practical work he rather tries to unleash the energies necessary for a transformation, and leave it to history and the audience what is being done with them.

Different from typical drag shows, cross-dressing on Shakespeare's stage itself addresses the kind of critique levelled from a number of feminists against male-to-female transvestite shows. From a general point of view, as described above, Butler values drag for its open citationality of gender that reveals both gay and straight identities as performative copies of social ideas on sexuality (*Trouble* 31). In her reading, drag is seen as a formally hybrid structure that stands against the norm of unity. As thus, it functions to bring out into the open a denaturalisation of gender identity. Problematic, however, are the images of women used in many drag shows, for they hardly correspond to real women and rather to conventional male heterosexual fantasies. Therefore, Jill Dolan affirms that the reason for this misogynistic representation lies in the fact that real "women are non-existent in drag performance, but woman-as-myth, as a cultural, ideological object, is constructed in an agreed upon exchange between the male performer and the usually male spectator. Male drag mirrors women's socially constructed roles" (qtd. in Ferries 10). This is an analysis also pertinent to Shakespeare's female figures, with the crucial difference that the plays themselves problematise this status of their female characters. If male drag performances do not show socially and politically empowered female figures, then this is so because they do not leave the rational of patriarchal order. Thus, Lesley Ferries points out that male drag "answers to a viable gay aesthetic while simultaneously promulgating misogynistic images of women" (9).[86]

[86]The viability lies clearly in its deviation from traditional masculinity as heterosexual. It glamourises homosexuality through the ironic citation of stereotypes of patriarchal femininity. By contrast, defenders of male drag usually argue that it is not about "mocking women, but the mores and rituals of the dominant culture" (Baker 237), that the presented masculinity is "less about wanting to be a woman, and more about refusing to be a man" (Baker 237). This desire is fair enough (although too generally phrased here), but the decisive question is what kind of role images of women play in this project to extend the possibilities of lived experience beyond the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity, and if this project really displaces the hegemony of masculinity over femininity.

By presenting women who are reduced to socially constructed roles, drag deprives them of what might be called personal and social agency. It presents women as the female subject, i.e., the "always already spoken for construction that replaces women as speaking subjects in representation" (Davy 242),[87] without exposing this subject as still a male fantasy. As such, male drag produces at the most a gender liminality for male spectators concerning the boundaries of bourgeois masculinity, but it does not overcome male hegemony nor does it present complex women as endowed with a voice of their own.[88] More simply put, do women have a postmodernity in all-male dramatic performances, a queer identity that comprises social agency?[89]

On the one hand, we have to admit that the absence of women on stage presents them as male fictions. As Greenblatt puts it: "[M]en love women precisely *as representations* [emphasis Greenblatt's], a love the original performances of these plays literalised in the person of the boy actor" (93). Thus, the answer would be no. But to use Greenblatt's descriptive insight as an argument against cross-casting implies that for a character to be believable, the actor needs to possess the same qualities as his/her character and impersonate the character, rather than indicate him/her. This would imply reducing theatrical aesthetics to mimetic realism. Nothing could be further from the

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[87] The distinction between the female subject as opposed to the subject of feminism goes back to de Lauretis (1984 and 1988) who in turn bases her analysis on Irigaray's concept of "hommosexuality" [sic]. Irigaray's coinage of this term is a pun on the French l'homme for "the man" and "man/human being" and marks the contention that within the heterosexual gender contract, only one sex is represented. "Hommosexuality", therefore, refers in fact to a concept of heterosexuality, in which the male sex is the only sex and the female one its/his always absent other (see Whitford).

[88] See also Benedek and Binder's analysis of drag performances. It supports Dolan's insight that drag in performance often reproduces the power of patriarchal norms and male bonding. In their analysis of a German drag show, they point out how patriarchal power is not subverted but presupposed for the puns to function.

[89] The same problem pervades the aesthetics of Camp, its foregrounding of artificiality, parody, wit, and exaggeration. On the connection of all-male dramatic performances with camp in general see Davy (1992) and Moe Meyer (1998). For an excellent overview on Camp see Cleto's introduction to the reader edited by him. Davy further forwards an interesting position by challenging the supposed subversiveness of gay camp on the grounds that gay irony ultimately works towards the political harmlessness of the play, whereas lesbian camp, the butch-femme figure, does not wink furtively to the dominant phallocratic order but claims power for itself.

reality of theatrical practice, and the argument reveals at its basis an understanding of gender as an essentialist quality that cannot get performed but only embodied.

The question is rather whether Shakespeare's cross-cast theater allows subject positions for its female figures that confer on them social agency, and if this agency depends on assuming "masculine" qualities alone. Of course, in Shakespeare's plays cross-dressing is a sign of inner independence on the part of the female character, and this independence extends beyond the end of cross-dressing and marks a moment of tension with patriarchal conventions. Furthermore, their successful agency is rather marked by acts of gender mixing, than by fulfilling conventional notions of masculinity or femininity.

If one is willing to accept that in all-male dramatic performances the final marriage scenes in Shakespeare's drama expose critically rather than fulfill mimetically social conventions and particularly patriarchal expectations, there is no reason to align them with conventional drag shows in their treatment of female subject positions. Ultimately, what matters is not the problem of textualization on the all-male stage, but the kind of text that is being produced and if the textualization is layed open and problematised.[90] Against a fixed, illusionist staging of gender, cross-dressed theater can try to activate the artificiality of any textualization of masculinity and femininity in order to suggest that gender is always a citational practice, possibly an act of subversive submission and as such specific versions of masculinity and femininity are a) imposed on, and b) open to any member in the audience. This would imply that the male actors' physical presence de-authenticates the gender of the male character as well; in other words, that they play with the masculine gender, too, rather than impersonating it.

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[90] We all textualise when we take the partner to be the image we have constructed out of him/her. Until reality thwarts our textualization, we do not perceive its fixed status. Such textualization is the problem,

Cross-cast Shakespearean narrative theater that exploits the effect of theatrical vibrancy by being self-consciously metatheatrical is likely to present a textualization of women and men that evokes its socio-political context and exposes the recuperative moments at the end of the play as male forms of wishfulfillment with much more ease than mixed-cast performances.[91]

The opportunities for all-male dramatic Shakespeare productions to produce a heterogeneous and politically subversive discourse on gender and social order seem to depend on a self-conscious exploration of theatrical vibrancy. Metatheatrical elements allow not only a multiple reading of the characters' gender on stage, but also expose the conventionality of purportedly recuperative endings. The narrative of the playtext can frame hybrid gender identities in such a way that it thwarts their transformation from a socio-political construction of identity onto a merely aesthetic construction, which would then serve as a compensatory fantasy. In doing so, such identities in turn overcome a confinement to late bourgeois aesthetics and are able to generate an insight in audience members to accept identities incongruent with social norms as a fundamental reality of their psychic experience. In fact, through this kind of non-illusionist theater that does not polemically refuse notions as character and ordered narrative, we may understand how *all* identities are incongruous, contradictory, queer and that sexual object choice is clearly not a category to invest an identity with characteristics exclusively its own. In this sense, all-male dramatic performances of Shakespeare's plays may provide instances of an emotionally engaging dialogic and

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and that is why its exposure as phantasmic wishfulfillment through theatrical and narrative displacements is all the more important.

[91] Different from John Russell Brown, I believe that the playtext in performance not only gives scope to individual prejudices, but *conjures them up to be able to criticise them*. Brown states that "each [audience] member is invited to complete the illusion of sexual activity in his or her mind, and left free to do so according to individual prejudices and predilections. Shakespeare's representation of gender and sexuality is […] recreated according to each member's innermost feelings and desires" ("Representing

dialectical theater, relating a critique of gender with one of social relations, without proposing a gender utopia where the category is purportedly rendered unbounded by social regulations.

The identification with the cross-cast and cross-dressed characters that are conceived as part of an anti-dominant social practice would be as emotionally seductive as it would be painful, for it implies an identificatory act with minority positions. As such, all-male dramatic performances would expose and intervene into the heterosexual and socio-political matrix and possibly instigate a discussion among audience members on its supposed advantages and disadvantages. This means that these performances would not apply a modern bourgeois strategy for audience manipulation where the ideal audience is the homogeneously enlightened one, but a postmodern strategy. They would foreground the differences within audience members and construct their ideal audience as a heterogeneous one whose internal discussions acknowledge and take into account the differing power positions between its members. As such, cross-dressed performance would allow for all kinds of spectators a constrained subjectivity which in its recognised contingency, limitation, and agency could claim a space for the renegotiation of the hegemonic cultural discourse on gender and social power. Instigating a discussion on this negotiation, all-male performances of Shakespeare's drama may actually intervene into the spectators' lived reality and make a difference there.

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sexuality", 177). Brown may want to cherish his private fantasies undisturbed by critical insights in sexual politics, but not every performance is willing to leave his privacy intact.

CHAPTER 3 Literary and Theatrical Reception of *As You Like It* as a History of Sexual Politics

In lived reality, communities have to negotiate impulses towards order and disorder, stability and transformation, so that they may survive and develop. Otherwise, they would disintegrate. The chief provocation of Shakespeare's plays – and especially his comedies – is the way how they negotiate these two aspects: criticizing hierarchic patriarchal order throughout while affirming in the end the apparent unavoidability of it. Or more positively framed, the comedies affirm a hierarchic society, in which nevertheless its marginalised groups manage to raise their voice and gain some – albeit limited – transforming political influence. Any production of the comedies will have to decide how to deal with this dialectics, which turns them into critical proposals for the relation between dominant and marginalised social groups.[92]

I do not intend to offer here a comprehensive overview of the history of literary interpretations and dramatic performances of *As You Like It*. The case-book edited by Edward Tomarken provides extensive and detailed material in this respect. For an overview, suffice it to say that technically one can divide literary interpretations into those that center either on character, on thematic motif or on structural characteristics.[93] Such classification, however, reveals little about the critical intention towards bourgeois

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[92] See Penny Gay's statement that "'Shakespearean comedy' foregrounds the fiction of 'the community'(both dubious but useful generalisations). [Hence] productions of these plays offer an easily readable text of the dominant hopes and fears of the society to which they are presented" (*Unruly* 13). Foregrounding fiction means exactly to call into question the natural basis of community and to draw critical attention to the social and emotional mechanisms that underlie its construction.

[93] Tomarken distinguishes more or less explicitly between these three approaches. New Historicism and Materialist Criticism in all their well-known ideological differences form a separate group, for they come to shift the focus of interpretation away from the playtext and onto the interaction between socio-historical context and playtext, turning the latter (including single characters, thematic elements and structural features) into a site of textual negotiations of extra-textual tensions (for representative readings, see among others, Greenblatt, Montrose for New Historicism, and Dollimore and Howard for Cultural Materialism).

patriarchal attitudes and structures, although the beginning of structural analysis paved the way for socio-cultural analyses that in turn problematised the relation between patriarchal structures and the playtext's narrative and discoursive structure.[94]

In the following, I shall summarise critical positions and performances in such a way that their function in defending or deconstructing a bourgeois patriarchal understanding of the play should become clear.

3.1 Gender Assumptions and the History of Literary Interpretation

Looking back on the history of the play's literary criticism, one perceives that throughout the centuries the Folio playtext has maintained a peculiar transgressive effect for subsequent generations, since it repeatedly underwent either adaptations that must be considered censorship,[95] or interpretations that turned one element of the text (be it a character or a specific motif) into its semantic center which therefore tends to

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[94] Character-based criticism was most popular within Romanticism, where character became rather detached from the dramatic and generic context in which s/he appeared (Tomarken 17-19). The understanding of one character came to stand for the play's ultimate message. Although the overall thrust was to celebrate Rosalind and Orlando, some female critics focused on Jaques and his refusal to participate in the celebrations, since they realised quite astutely that marriage meant disempowerment for Rosalind. The bachelor functioned as role-model for independent women. Thematic interpretations encompass such ideologically diverse approaches as eighteenth-century interpretations of the play as one on the social importance of marriage (Samuel Johnson), Victorian interpretations of the play as one on pastoral and the character-building implications of experiencing this spirit (Gervinus), one about foolery and its capacities to integrate opposites and produce wisdom (Ulrici), one about the dangers and capacities of love as Caprice (Kolbe), or twentieth-century interpretations as a play on saturnalian rites within a frame of daily routine (Barber), on love as a path to self-knowledge and, indirectly then, also to the pre-destined lover (Gardner), and finally Jan Kott's reading of the play in general and Rosalind in particlur as embodiments of androgyneity and the utopian human desire to become 'whole'. Equally, some analyses of gender roles, transvestism and the circulation of erotic energies belong to that group, namely those by Paglia, Traub, or Rackin. Structural features became the bearer of meaning in the second half of the twentieth-century, with Northorp Frye's archetypal readings of romantic comedy as initially divided into a green world and an everyday world, which are fused at the end of the narrative when the green world enters the world of everyday reality; Ralph Berry's political reading of the play as one where no traditionally utopian realm is free of power struggles and hierarchy; Agnes Latham, who influenced Peter Stein's production process in 1977, believed that "for Shakespeare the opinions and conceptions voiced by the characters were more important than they be totally consistent and fully developed as characters" (Tomarken 51). Latham still detects in the play's theatricalization of discourse a proposal for a final harmonization of courtly civilization and natural, 'good' values. Against this redemptive reading, Peter Erickson interpretes this circular structure as a reinstalation of patriarchal power. Both forms of dramatic closure, however, can get seriously undermined by performance centred readings that take the stage presence of the boy-actor as its starting point (see Soule).

control meaning. Both approaches have worked towards a streamlining of those contradictory elements that did not comply with the respective moral value system of the specific historical moment.

Of course, contradictions have been perceived as an integral part of the playtext before the advent of deconstructive readings. However, such contradictions were usually understood as part of an ultimately harmonious whole. As Agnes Latham describes this effect for Arden: “It might look as though every sentiment presented us is liable at any moment to be undermined. But it is not so. […] The contradictions are offered as part of a life which is in fact full of them, but is livable all the same, even enjoyable” (lxxxv). And she applies the same attitude to the patriarchal ending: “Basically [the play] is about right values and good life. Paradoxically, and momentarily, the good life is found in the woods. It should be found in the court and when Duke Senior resumes his sway it will be found in the court again” (lxxxiv). Traditional readings tend to subsume structure, thematic elements and character development under a bigger harmony, as does paradigmatically Harold Jenkins: “One must not say that Shakespeare never judges, but that one judgment is always modified by another. Opposite views may contradict each other, but of course they do not cancel out. Instead they add up to an all-embracing view far larger and more satisfying than any one of them by itself” (45).[96]

In order to add up, one must put some ideas on top and others on lower ranks. In fact, for this traditional criticism, the representation and celebration of benevolent order is the play’s goal. To uphold it, a few interpretative presuppositions pervade this

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[95] See especially the adaptation by Charles Johnson (in Tomarken 4-11).
[96] J.Halio’s edition of critical essays unites a number of important essays in this critical vein. My main objection to this interpretation is its abstract concept of reconciliation. As I will argue below, the epilogue affirms the human fascination with such reconciliation, but also poses the question of how to achieve it in the lived reality of the audience.

criticism: the play's action develops from a corrupted court through the arcadian, pastoral 'green world' of Arden to a redemptive rejuvenation of the court (going back, of course, to the readings of Barber and Frye); the play endorses the values of a romantic love, according to which love is the ultimate fulfillment and goal of human existence; consequently, marriage is the symbolic culmination of the play's action and disorder becomes order renewed; Rosalind and Orlando are free of serious mischief and form a perfect, 'pure' couple; Duke Senior is the embodiment of benign paternal, flatly positive, authority. In this order, women are naturally designed to be politically subservient, however outspoken in private. As we shall see, these intrinsically conservative bourgeois assumptions still inform Clifford Williams' production.

These recuperative assumptions can get countered by a close reading of the playtext's argumentation, but they may equally well be undermined by a performance orientated criticism that endorses the non-illusionist characteristics of the play. As a non-mimetic performance text, it does not propose stage figures as a role model for the audience to emulate, but exposes these figures as problematic subject positions assigned to a specific character. From this point of view, a specific character appears as the embodiment of fantasies held by other characters and audience members. Leslie Anne Soule makes a convincing point as to the effect of the boy-actor on Rosalind's stage presence. The male adolescent actor marks the character Rosalind with characteristics of a traditional master of misrule, so that Rosalind as a theatrical figure oscillates between character (a function within the theatrical narrative) and a popular directorial type (a function that exceeds the narrative).

Other conflictive readings have been employed by feminist, Marxist, or other politically sensitive literary scholars. They have foregrounded, for example, how pastoral as expressed in the natural world of Arden is shot through with the necessity to

kill in order to survive as well as the necessity to work for a living.[97] The romance motif in *As You Like It* produces a more animalesque reading than usual not only through the subplot involving Touchstone, but also through possible parallels between Touchstone's play with Audrey and Rosalind's game with Orlando.[98] What marks human beings is not love, but desire; not fulfillment, but the loss and dream of it. And the final marriage can be read as a restoration of traditional order, a return to the harsh world of political power, in which the resolution of conflicts is postponed. In general, this criticism produces a hybridisation of genres and thematic subject matter. It foregrounds inner disunity and instability, the existence of deviant sexual impulses and an omnipresence of political power that undermines the harmonic surface of familiar and political reconciliation.

Jan Kott is certainly the scholar who represents a moment of change, basically because he is the first to deny that the discoursive contradictions in *As You Like It* receive a resolution. For Kott, Rosalind as a character even more than the "green world" of Arden represents the image of a *lost* androgynous paradise.[99] Kott views the play as ironically enacting a human longing for a "reconciliation of all contradictions" (235) and Rosalind as the most emblematic character to inspire this desire within audience members. However, Kott never suggests, as does Stanley Wells (see Tomarken 48), that *As You Like It* presents an ending where "*concordia discors* is achieved." Rather, he affirms that the play mocks this impression of final achievement as illusionary. Kott's heritage for successive critics and directors is an increasing readiness to foreground how

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[97] Edward Tomarken turns to the category of genre as "the single most important and dominant issue in over 300 years of commentary on *As You Like It*" (4). It is certainly possible to state that the interest in the play is first of all dominated by the attempt to come to terms with its peculiar mixture of theatrical and literary genres – pastoral, folk comedy, romantic comedy, revenge tragedy, even existentialist tragedy in the disguise of comedy. However, it is even more important to understand how arguments over genre meant arguments over models of social order and social utopias.

[98] See Soule for Touchstone and Rosalind as embodying two traditional types of clown figures in comedy.

problems and contradictions haunt the endings of Shakespearean comedy and dissatisfy a desire for harmony and reconciliation on the audience's side. Ralph Berry's essay "No Exit from Arden" is exemplary for this vein of criticism from the 1970s on, which foregrounds parallels between Arden, shot through with the uneasing effect of economic and personal power, and the court, between the "green" and the "real" world.[100]

Yet, before the 1980s, literary criticism hardly exposed the prating and marrying of Rosalind and Orlando as seriously shot through with elements of *patriarchal* power play, nor did it problematise the reorganisation of social order as patriarchal. In this context, Peter Erickson's study in the *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama* is central for a "feminist"[101] understanding of patriarchal power, androgyny, and the custom of the boy-actor in the play. He bases his interpretation of the play on the question of male bonding and perceives how "[m]ale friendship, exemplified by the reconciliation of Duke Senior and Orlando, provides a framework that diminishes and contains Rosalind's apparent power" (16). And "[c]oncentration on Rosalind to the neglect of other issues distorts the overall design of *As You Like It*, one that is governed by male ends" (16). Moreover, "[t]he power symbolized by her male costume is only temporary, and the harmonious conclusion is based on her willingness to relinquish this power" (16). Erickson concurs with traditional readings that the play wants to present a harmonious version of male power, but he wants to expose female subordination as the usually supressed fundament of it. For him, it is only Orlando (and through him as

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[99] This effect does not depend on the boy-actor, although Kott believed that it can only be fully explored on stage through a male actor.

[100] This aspect very often turned Touchstone into a central character of the play's message. Berry states that "[H]e compels us to look for motives that are not stated in the text, which does however contain part-motives or pseudo-motives. I find the missing motive here to be the drive to power, because that is of a piece with Touchstone's relationships with his un-superiors; and because it embodies the drift of the whole play" (194). However, turning round this argument, and keeping in mind Touchstone's soliloquy on the virtues of "if", it is possible to use the same parallelism to predict for the court a less bleak future than critics' interest in the workings of power are usually willing to do.

[101] Inverted commas, since I do not want to get into the question whether men can be or act as feminists.

proxy the men in the audience) who experiences a lasting integration of "attributes traditionally labeled masculine and feminine" (31). Androgyny is a humanizing force for men, but not an empowering one for women.[102] Since Erickson interpretes the epilogue as the final defence against female power, for Rosalind turns out to be male after all, he can conclude that "not only are women to be subordinate; they can, if necessary, be imagined as nonexistent" (35).[103] The promotion of male androgyny in *As You Like It* does not imply the acknowledgement of individual women as equal. "The sense of the patriarchal ending in *As You Like It* is that male androgyny is affirmed whereas female "liberty" in the person of Rosalind is curtailed" (35). With this critique, Erickson is in line with some feminist criticism that understands all-male performances as staging male fantasies, a viable aesthetics for gay men but in its hostility towards women fostering patriarchal gender roles within heterosexual couples.

Although Erickson is certainly right in emphasizing that women and their experience are rendered a theatrical sign and ultimately a male fantasy on stage, it is possible to read the final marriage scene and the epilogue in a way that destabilises patriarchal resolutions more strongly than he is willing to concede. This patriarchal marriage is shot through with moments of chaos and disruptive power, not only through Hymen's difficulty to bar disorder and Jaques' weary admonishments, but also through the self-assertive role that the daughter Rosalind plays in it. Even Erickson is aware of how her double vow "To you I give myself, for I am yours" (V.4.116-117) can be read as an ironic act of formal submission. He is right in stressing the reconciliation of Duke and husband as the reinstallment of patriarchy, but the marriage scene also shows how unstable this patriarchal rule is at heart. Erickson's reading does not, at this moment,

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[102] See also Hayles, who nevertheless believes that the symbolic power at the heart of androgyny is the capacity to renounce any definite identity – a capacity expressed by both Orlando and Rosalind.

take into account possible theatrical renderings of this scene that foreground Rosalind's partisan tactics, be it through a focus on the metatheatrical character of the masque, or the addressing of men and women in the epilogue.

What's more, a close reading of the epilogue reveals a carefully phrased acknowledgment of different power positions for men and women in the lived reality of the audience. This attention undercuts the fictional community on stage, its unity under patriarchal terms, by putting it against the existing singularity of men and women in the audience. In Erickson's reading, the epilogue is simply emphasizing once more the message of the Duke's final conjuring lines "We will begin these rites,/ As we do trust they'll end, in true delights" (V.4.196-7). Rosalind's epilogue constructs the masque and the marriage scene as expression and direction of a psychic desire, but not as its harmonious fulfillment. Hence, it acknowledges and problematises the textualization of female experience in the narrative of the play. For Rosalind both affirms the celebratory aspect of romantic notions on marriage as embodied in the theatrical display of the wedding festivity ("I am not furnished like a beggar, therefore […] my way is to conjure you" – V.4. 206-207) and undermines it, when she immediately afterwards implicitly acknowledges its ideality. To make the play's magic work for the audience, so that a "good play […] proves the better" (V.4.203), audience members must acknowledge that women and men who like this play of love, like it from different power positions. And to continue to do so, they must take this into consideration. Hence, women are given the right to resist the love play, its narrative and ending ("like as much of this play as please you" - V.4.210) and men are charged with the responsibility to make the love play pleasurable ("I charge you […] that between you and the women the play may please" – V.4.211-214). This is certainly a critical acknowledgement of patriarchal gender

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[103] Erickson apparently overlooks the formulation in the epilogue in which women and men are addressed

stereotypes and power positions. It is also an acknowledgement of both the imaginative power and social limitations of the performance. The epilogue comments on the fantastical celebration of communion in the masque as an illusion, and possibly, if the spectators know how to use it, an impulse for transformative action, not mere utopian hope. Hence, the applause is not only the approval of the performance, but also of the charge put by Rosalind that renders the theatrical recuperation of heterosexual eroticism and family bonds highly unstable.[104]

In my understanding, Rosalind's epilogue, despite its reconciliatory tone, is a lesson in *Realpolitik* concerning love relationships, an acknowledgment of patriarchal power as the unavoidable horizon of action as well as a licence for women to subvert this horizon.[105] Textually, the epilogue not only plays with a displacement of gender dichotomies, but acknowledges their ongoing formative force, too. But then, if the play did please, it did so with Orlando being verbally whipped by Rosalind; with Rosalind assuming the role of Jove's lover Ganymede; with Orlando being fascinated and attracted by Ganymede; with the Duke as an insensitive, but benevolent patriarch and Orlando as his lucky protegé; and, finally, Rosalind as a kind of trickster figure, a witty expert in making patriarchy work for herself. On the whole, the curious result of the play's dramatic and discoursive ambiguity is to produce a critique that affects the very institutions and positions which the play synthesises narratively.

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separately.

[104] Alice Solomon has come up with a similar interpretation of the epilogue's function, although she centers on gender confusion and innuendos of lesbian sexuality. Therefore, she comes to the opposite conclusion, as far as the effect on women is concerned: "[T]he love women bear to men is to have *no* bearing on their love of the play" (25). I would say that it is acknowledged and allowed to have *all* bearings on their love of the play, which might include flat refusal. As far as awareness of power positions is concerned, she remains rather general by stating that "the actor offers the play both as a mediator between men and women, and as an event that separates them from each other" (25).

[105] Most commentators see the epilogue as either affirming (van den Berg, in Shapiro 133) or bridging the gap between theatrical Arden and the socially fixed audience (Cirillo, in Shapiro 133). In terms of gender, a similar manichaeistic interpretative pattern of the epilogue appears as either undercutting heterosexual

Hence, I would not subscribe to Frye's or Barber's three-step structure for this comedy. I would rather state a four-step comedy, similar to the argumentative structure of the Shakespearean sonnet, in which the final couplet presents a surprising twist of the third quatrain generally seen as synthesis derived from the thesis and anti-thesis of the first two quatrains. In the end, such criticism of the playtext does not automatically affirm benevolent patriarchy. The discoursive twist in the epilogue focuses on a clear ethical commitment, for the playtext and the epilogue not only express a critique of insensitive political power, but compel the audience members to make their love last within (and simultaneously against) the only superficially harmonic reality of patriarchal hierarchies. In a terminology taken from Judith Butler, we can say that *As You Like It* negotiates the "normative conditions of recognition" under which people with different sex and sexual preferences, from different power positions and with different interiorised cultural norms form social bonds and try to maintain them.

However, borrowing for a moment John Russel Brown's suggestion that under specific circumstances theatrical productions may work as "an agent for the practical testing of ideas which society as a whole will not admit" ("Theatre Production" 21), the performance history of *As You Like It* reveals how rarely this negotiation on stage has challenged the normative fundaments of its respective patriarchal context.

3.2. Gender Assumptions and the History of Dramatic Performances

The performance history of *As You Like It* in England starts with a lacuna, for there is no evidence on the year of the play's first production. It is generally assumed that it was first performed at the Globe around 1600 (Hattaway 43), since it was included in the Stationer's Register in 1600. Edward Tomarken describes the period

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patriarchal dichotomies (Adelman 84-86, Dusinberre, *Shakespeare* 266, Belsey 187-88) or affirming them

between 1600 and 1724/40 as a "mystery" (4). The disinterest in *As You Like It* is a form of neglect the play shares with other Shakespearean 'middle' comedies.[106] Tomarken looks for specific reasons why the play was almost completely ignored by professional companies until 1724, when Charles Johnson's adaptation *Love in a Forest* appeared.[107] His answer drawing on an analysis of the adaptations stresses the political elements of marriage as a microcosmic restoration of civil order. To do so, Charles Johnson censored those elements that could threaten the didactic interest in love as idealised emblem of social harmony. He cut Touchstone and socialised the outsider Jaques into the festive community, thus containing his destructive critique of human's interest in lust and power, by marrying him to Celia. Jaques' melancholy does not become metaphysically and politically subversive; it is not directed at political institutions, but as the effect of sexual and emotional frustration, it gets healed through love and overcome in marriage. Combining an analysis of Samuel Johnson's remarks on the play's moral deficiencies concerning missed out comments on the usurping duke's conversion and Charles Johnson's adaptation, Tomarken concludes that so soon after the Civil War, "the subject of political usurpation, particularly in the stark and brutal terms as it is presented in *As You Like It*, may have been too dangerous for the stage from 1660 until 1723" (5). An explanation derived from sexual politics in the theatre is given by Jamieson ("Performance," 625), who attributes this neglect to the lack of

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(Erickson 34-35).

[106] "When the playhouses reopened in 1660 those middle comedies of Shakespeare which centre on disguise, love and courtship were not revived" (Jamieson 625).

[107] Plays generally get what Nahum Tate calls "rectified" (in Gay, 'Performance' 157) towards "regularity and plausibility," revealing a sentimentalised and at the same time classic approach to theatrical art. Restoration appropriations produced a decorous and elegantly balanced "Shakespeare." The cultural stability surrounding these appropriations is exemplified by the fact that for the next 150 years, up to the Romantic movement and its interest in the darker sides of human psyche, Tate's *King Lear* and Dryden's *All for Love* were more popular plays than the respective Quarto and Folio playtexts.

interest in Orlando on the part of leading male actors.[108] Combining both interpretations, we can conclude that the Folio *As You Like It* was unacceptable or tedious for Restoration theatre companies, since it does not bring enough male role models on stage.[109] The socio-political threat did not derive from female empowerment, but from the presentation of faulty masculinity.

With time it seems that the necessity of presenting men in control of themselves, as defenders of social convention and firm builders of family life gave way to more voyeuristic interests in the female figure on stage.[110] During the eighteenth century neither Rosalind's role-playing as Ganymede, her confusion of gender boundaries nor her inversion of sexual power positions seems to have called up comments as being indecorous or subversive. It was either silently cherished, or theatrically blunted. What's more, she clearly becomes the leading character of the play. Her success is responsible for turning *As You Like It* into one of the most popular Shakespearean comedies in England from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, a position which it should not lose up to the present.[111] The reason for Rosalind's increasing popularity most certainly lies in the patriarchal horizon as described by Erickson. It

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[108] This is less absurd than it seems given the fact that Henry Irving at the end of the nineteenth century refused to stage *As You Like It* with the then leading British actress Ellen Terry as Rosalind, since the play did not provide an acceptable part for him as actor-manager (Gay, 'Performance' 165).

[109] Duke Senior constitutes an exception to this lack, but his role is not central enough to the play's action. Furthermore, his dukedom falls back to him through divine providence, not his own effort. It is understandable that even he may not be wholeheartedly embraced by Restoration men with political aspirations.

[110] Penny Gay describes to what extent the Shakespearean heroine on the early eighteenth-century stage was a dreamed-up figure, since the "encounter of Restoration actresses from the middle class playing ladies from the upper class in a rewritten playtext produced no more 'real women' than the boys who first performed the roles. They [the actresses] added the potential for the display of 'real' sexuality […] but this fact ultimately only contributed to the lubriciousness of a stage that was set up primarily as a spectacle for the male (even regal) gaze" (158). It is necessary to remember that women in the audience could also fantasise themselves as objects of this gaze, which accounts for their interest in such display of femininity. Ina Schabert ("Männertheater") describes this interiorised male gaze in respect to leading Shakespearean actresses throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

[111] According to Schroeder, "from 1751 – 1800, *As You Like It* ranked eighth out of the twenty-nine plays produced" (qtd in Tomarken 7). Tomarken also recalls Odells belief "that from 1742 to 1817 productions became more frequent as the century progressed" (7). And Michael Hattaway, drawing on Salgado,

seems, however, that this horizon changes from the Restoration to the eighteenth century in so far as Orlando is gradually turned into a figure male audience members can identify with.

Since, within the narrative, Rosalind never voices the wish to leave her position as daughter, she could easily be perceived as knowing this position as her place and destination. From that position, she can make patriarchy work for herself and especially for Orlando, which makes her archness not only charming but powerful. Nothing indicates that in any production of the period, her marriage was not staged as a form of submission. Her power, then, is ultimately her husband's empowerment, and she takes up her place in society as a loyal wife who can gratify her rational and responsible husband with wit and emotionality.[112] If there is a story that illustrates Lacan's concept on the gender-specific phantasmagoric status of the phallus, namely that woman is the phallus which man wants to have in order to affirm his phallic prowess, it is this bourgeois reading of Rosalind as ultimately empowering Orlando. One can even deduce that the desire to produce Rosalind and Orlando as images of plenitude increased the play's popularity in performance throughout Romanticism. In Romantic performances, Orlando gains in masculine strength, determination and poetic sensibility, which makes him a perfect Romantic husband. In a way, he becomes Byronised, as we can perceive

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recalls that "from 1776 to 1817 *As You Like It* was more frequently acted than any other Shakespearean play at Drury Lane […] [b]ecause of a succession of great Rosalinds" (47).

[112] Against this conventional understanding stands a view, put forward by Jeanne Addison Roberts, that the famous actresses from the eighteenth century such as Pritchard, Clive, and Woffington "were able to suggest a kind of female freedom that was revolutionary" (in Tomarken 55). Tomarken quotes Roberts' statement that these actresses bridged "both class and sex barriers. They pleased the aristocrats with their wit and high spirits, but they also gratified the middle class with their lack of aristocratic pretension" (219). But this does not make them revolutionaries in terms of gender politics. Rather, these women acted out a traditional privilege of powerless women, namely to express a rich emotionality, together with some kinky innuendos given the breeches role. Throughout bourgeois patriarchy, men both claimed leadership in household and public affairs while simultaneously acknowledging female superiority in terms of emotional affairs and seductiveness. However, women's emotionality (ideally) did not challenge the leadership of male principles. It was meant to remain in a kind of ornamental status. One can sense in these expectations the notion of a wife as "man's better half" and the place where he can find understanding, solace, and compensation for his worldly troubles.

in Hazlitt's description of Charles Kemble's performance. Hazlitt uses terms that were traditionally applied to Rosalind's stage appearance: "the easy wit, and sprightly vivacity of sentiments, delivered with such true comic spirit, archness, and grace, that the audience, who seemed quite taken by surprise, expressed their delight in loud and long tokens of approbation" (*Dramatic Magazine*, II (1830-31), 347 qtd in Tomarken 18). Thus, Romantic performances may well have produced an also theatrically "feminised" Orlando, who "deserves" his social rehabilitation by becoming androgynous – very much in line with Erickson's argument that an androgynous Orlando does not undermine the patriarchal thrust of playtext and performance.

The insight that bourgeois patriarchal performances depended on a Rosalind who – as an image of plenitude for male fantasies – had gained a predominantly phantasmagoric status is attested by the fact that Romantic audiences were ready to discard as unimportant the physical characteristics of the actress playing Rosalind. Dora Jordan, one of the most acclaimed Rosalinds at the end of the eighteenth century, not only played the role for twenty-seven years, but "often in advanced stages of pregnancy" (Jamieson 627).[113] Jamieson also mentions an engraving of her Rosalind by Henry Bunbury in 1795 concluding that "[t]he disguise as Ganymede would fool nobody; this Rosalind is deliciously [Tomarken's qualification, St.B] feminine even *en travestie*" (627). Combining both observations, we can conclude that gender blending was avoided on stage, but the perfection of Rosalind's femininity apparently did not reside in an ideal body, but in the display of other qualities. Jamieson gives a hint as to why an audience is willing to take in an apparently pregnant, almost middle-aged actress as a vivacious, witty and flirtatious young lady on stage. He cites Sarah Siddons'

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[113] Dora Jordan's life seems to impersonate the kind of female empowering within patriarchal order that Roberts claims for her predecessors. Her self-determination is confirmed less because she gave birth to

brother J.P.Kemble, who declared that Jordan's voice was "like the natural notes of some sweet melody which drops from it whether it will or no" (627). Voice was so powerful an element that it could overcome even the most incredulous physical discrepancies between actress and role and sustain the necessary associations with all-encompassing notions such as nature, harmony, and spontaneity. The fact that the physical image of an aurally enchanting mother on stage could fulfill the gender fantasies of such bourgeois audiences on Rosalind may prove how much the character had already been disconnected from clownerie.

Interestingly enough, two decades earlier Sarah Siddons had attempted to play Rosalind-as-Ganymed in a costume "concealing her limbs, and was ridiculed in the press" (Jamieson 627). Schroeder cites an eye-witness that complains about the gender confusing quality of her dress, "which gave her a most equivocal appearance" (in Tomarken 9). Surprisingly, this eyewitness concludes that this costume renders "Orlando's stupidity astonishing, in not making a premature discovery of his mistress" (9). For the eyewitness, it seems too alien to imagine that a man could wear such an equivocal dress, thus the person within must be female. Female to male cross-dressing is accepted and even cherished for producing erotic feelings as long as it maintains the gender dichotomy, i.e., regarding the controlling superiority of the male gaze and making visible the female's willingness to offer not only her body parts but, *pars pro toto*, herself. This gratification Siddons' dress could not produce. The "grotesqueness" of her dress alluded to a femininity that could not get accommodated to the male desire of constructing the female body according to its wishes as a body of plenitude at his disposal. The trouble and ridicule around Sarah Siddons' presentation of Rosalind confirms Mary Hamer's (in Gay, *She* 189, note 5) analysis that

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ten children out of wedlock, but more because she lived openly with their father, the Duke of Clarence

> in the course of two centuries, as the play from 1741 onwards became ever more firmly established in the popular taste, the presentation of its heroine became fixed in a predictably idealizing mode. Play and heroine […] came to constitute a sort of group fantasy […] reinforced by actresses' willingness to display [their] femininity in a particularly appealing and unthreatening way.

Siddons' theatrical failure was not her personal failure as actress, but derived from her refusal to serve these male expectations.

If up to the Romantic period, Rosalind could use cross-dressing to enhance the seductivity of her female identity for the audience, Victorian conceptions de-eroticised the gender game and strengthened clear-cut gender identities. In a paradigmatic way, Helen Faucit purifies Rosalind-as-Ganymede from erotic innuendos ("not for the world would she have Orlando recognise her in her unmaidenly disguise" 257, qtd in Tomarken 27) and insists on a clear separation of gender identities for her two audiences: the theatre audience, who is in with the cross-dressing joke, must continue to see her only as the well-bred, refined lady, whereas Orlando must not get the slightest doubt regarding her sex as male. The first is achieved through "refinement in tone and manners", and the second through a presentation of "vivacity and dash" (262, qtd. in Tomarken 28), which for me, however, does not seem to be a very "masculine" expression of leadership. What Faucit's highly influential conception[114] makes clear is how it must have been considered absurd by actresses and audience alike to state that Rosalind is an ambiguous figure in erotic and gender terms. In this spirit, Faucit can deny plausibility to those who "maintain that Shakespeare was governed, in drawing his heroines, by the fact that they were acted by boys" (262-63, in Tomarken 28).[115] With

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and future King William IV (Jamieson 627).

[114] See Tomarken: "[A]s Schroeder demonstrates, Faucit's version of the heroine of *As You Like It* dominated the stage from the 1840s when she first came to prominence until well after her last performance in 1879" (28).

[115] It comes to no surprise then, as Tomarken notes, that Macready's famous production in 1842 – with Helen Faucit as Rosalind – was probably the first to take the "Cuckoo" song away from Rosalind, "since the cuckoo is associated with illicit sexual desires and Faucit's rendition avoids any such suggestions of unmaidenliness" (27).

this understanding, Rosalind has fully become an embodiment of instrinsic female qualities, not a projection of male fantasies.

The clear gender separation in Victorian performance is indicative of an interest in inner purity that kept not only genres distinct within the narrative but also character unproblematic. On the whole, this concept reigned for more than 100 years.[116] This interest was softened up by a criticism that focused on the dynamic structure of the dramatic process (Barber, Frye, Gardner). But up to the early 1960s, productions did not subvert the harmonic and reconciliatory ending of *As You Like It*'s dramatic action.[117] This traditional tone is true even for Michael Elliot's production in 1961 with Vanessa Redgrave as a Rosalind "that smiles away all problems" (Tomarken 45). Recalling Erickson's remark on the centrality of Rosalind for homogenizing readings of the play, it is no coincidence that the production's mentioned relied heavily on a Rosalind whose charm and wit are accompanied by gentleness and even "unstrained charity."[118] A review in the *Manchester Guardian* on Edith Evan's presentation attests to this continuity from pre-Romantic to early twentieth-century interpretation, by reporting that at the end, "the audience is made one Orlando [sic!]" (Jamieson, "Performance" 634). The idealization of femininity, and as such its redemptive function for men, is as palpable in this production as in Restoration productions so concerned with marriage as the happy, even blissful recuperation of public order through an idealised private microcosm.

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[116] Macready's production in 1842 was remarkable, too, because it juxtaposed genres through stage business and scenery. In the erection of a maypole for the marriage scene, for example, he confounded boundaries between pastoral and romance. Significantly, at this moment of the narrative, this stage business resembles more a redemptive fusion than a disturbing confusion of boundaries.

[117] See 1936 at the Old Vic, with a forty-nine year old Edith Evans as Rosalind, Glen Byam Shaw's production in 1957 with Peggy Ashcroft. (See, among others, Tomarken).

[118]The *Sunday Times* reviewer on Vanessa Redgrave's interpretation. Again, we can see how the traditional male gaze idealises a Rosalind who fuses enchanting with maternal attributes.

Even the innovative characteristics of Michael Elliot's production, namely the hunting of the stag on stage and the coexisting characterization of Arden as shot through with bloodthirst and savagery, do not go to that length as suggesting that this ambiguity affects the leading female energy of the play. As the reviewers make clear, Redgrave's Rosalind is the healing power, the charitable center of dramatic interaction and suffering. As far as gender is concerned, the notion of this production as a landmark relies very much on Elliot's and Redgrave's ability to give Rosalind's femininity, her character traits and physical appearance, an unmistakenly mid-twentieth century look (barefoot and denim-capped), i.e., director and actress seductively update received notions of femininity.[119] The delight in Vanessa Redgrave's performance is first of all a delight in this ability to use her body on stage as a confirmation of essential feminine qualities – not the least her existence of a charmingly seductive object of male voyeurism.[120] Not surprisingly, the production ends with a marriage ritual by way of a traditional masque whose dancing couples not only celebrate marriage as the implied telos of the play's dramatic action, but by choosing the onlooking duke as the stable (albeit isolated!) center of their swirls, they equally celebrate the restoration of patriarchal order.[121]

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[119] See, for example Eric Keown's critique, cited in Gay (*She* 54) in the magazine *Punch*: "[S]he is an entirely modern Rosalind. She might be any of our daughters, bowled head over heels, and it is a pleasure to watch her." And even more in that direction, Julian Holland's impression in the *Evening News* is that "[s]he achieved something rare in acting – she was at once timeless and contemporary" (qtd in Gay, *She* 55).

[120] See, for example, the critics' reaction to Redgrave's taking off her cap from time to time and revealing her golden hair as prove for a radiant femininity: "But when the sun shines, it shines full – most of all in those fleeting moments when Miss Redgrave escapes from her boy's disguise, snatches off her cap so that her hair tumbles like a flock of goldfinches into sunshine" (J.W.Lambert *The Sunday Times*, 9 Jul 1961, no page available).

[121] Despite the attempt to avoid gender confusion, Redgrave's presentation of gender was not unproblematic. As Rosalind-as-Ganymed, Redgrave produces a number of body postures in front of Orlando that are decodable as typically feminine. Shortly after falling into these positions, she gives signs of realizing her "error" and corrects it. The effect is not only a metatheatrical comment on the art of acting, but also an emotional intriguing one, for it allows Ganymede a seductive interest in and power over Orlando that crosses gender and heterosexuality, since Orlando does not look through her disguise. The audience may start to wonder where his fascination stems from: the young man in front of him or the

Elliot's 1961 production could not have been influenced by Jan Kott's essays on Shakespearean dramaturgy, but its Arden already reveals hints of the ambiguity which the Polish scholar would champion. In fact, up to the cultural turmoil of the 1960s, Rosalind continues to serve as an unproblematic object of identification and desire for female and male audience members alike. Productions which openly problematised harmonizing and redemptive readings did not appear on stage before 1973, when Buzz Goodbody's feminist version attempted to use the narrative of *As You Like It*, namely its reversal of the traditional roles in Elizabethan comedy according to which the young hero frees his young lady-love from an oppressive order, to comment critically on gender stereotyping and a woman's place in society (Gay, *She* 65). She was criticised because the rendering purportedly lacked wit and light-heartedness (Hattaway 53), but even more because the production ultimately seems to have found no language to make its hippie-like erotic freedom in Arden dialogue with the constraints of socially constructed stereotypes of femininity – possibly because Goodbody did not believe in the plausibility of the wedding scene, where such a dialogue is most prominent and problematic (Gay, *She* 65). Surprisingly, the confusion of gender images and sexual power positions present in the programme and the poster, which showed a unisex looking couple from behind, did not find its way on the stage. Seductive as she was as Ganymede, Eileen Atkin's interpretation was seen as decidedly heterosexual, as were the costumes which neatly reproduced contemporary hippie notions on gender (65).[122]

imagined lady. Yet, none of the critics commented on this problem, which suggests that they had little sensibility for the erotic potentials of Ganymede. It was all credited as attesting to Rosalind's/Redgrave's feminine charm. A similarily seductive boy actor would have clearly complicated the situation.

[122] This interest in anti-traditional interpretations also found its way into Trevor Nunn's production at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1977 and Colin Dexter's production at the Olivier Theatre in London in 1979. Curiously enough, however, questions of sexual politics remained excluded from their analyses of ideology and power positions.

The first to foreground the question of female empowerment was the production at the RSC in 1985, directed by Adrian Noble and widely remembered because of Juliet Stevenson's Rosalind. The whole team created an imaginative and provocative dialogue between a focused conception and the excessiveness of the playtext. With its Jungian framework, the show allowed for a dramatic empowering of the characters – especially Rosalind, Celia, and Jaques – , provided a transpersonal interpretation of the playtext's meaning, and at the same time avoided any political commitment. The liberating impulses of the play can get released only under the condition that the characters' development be cut off from social reality – possibly an implicit comment on the power of Thatcherism in the 1980s in Britain.

The unwillingness to account for those aspects of the psyche that are socially conditioned is clearly present in the programme's quotations of C.G. Jung or Heinrich Zimmer as well as in Juliet Stevenson's comments on her interpretation of Rosalind. The journey into the forest is no escape from tyranny, but "a journey in a distant region" (Zimmer, qtd. in the programme). Stevenson understands the male and female as archetypes, not as social constructions: the play "is a vital exploration of gender, the male and the female within us all. Rosalind is very released when her masculine aspect is allowed to release" (Gay, *She* 76). Stevenson clearly understands and values the masculine as the archetypal Jungian animus, not as the norms and character traits dominant in patriarchal society. Tomarken notes the downplaying of political issues as a problem of dramaturgical balance: "are the characters of the play more important than the play itself, particularly when character is developed from the point of view of the individual's position in the gender and political/social hierarchy" (59)? In other words, he is dissatisfied with the psychological reading of the play as too reductive – and some of the dramaturgical changes implemented on the reopening of the Stratford production

in London show how the production tried to come to terms with the neglected social dimension of playtext and performance.

Yet, the Jungian approach allowed treating gender in a less rigid way, since both Rosalind and Orlando, acting out their "animus" and "anima" respectively, transgressed traditional gender concepts. This in a way androgynous approach to both characters rendered a highly complex Rosalind on stage. Judging by the reviews, Stevenson's Rosalind-as-Ganymede in baggy trousers and unisex hair-style manages to hold the different gender layers present for the audience.[123]

The tendency to forget about politics and to read this romantic comedy merely in archetypal terms – Noble's own definition of comedy was "a ceremony or initiation leading towards matrimony" (in Gay, *She* 77) – is both acknowledged and problematised in the reworking of the marriage scene. The London version staged a marriage scene that was allowed to play against the happy-end by interrupting the dance and making actors to face the audience (Gay, *She* 76, 81 and 191, note 21), and then leave backdoors through a hole that resembled the moon. In doing so, Noble in a way succumbed to Stevenson's objections that the production should not stabilise the reworking of gender relations by staging a conventional marriage ritual.[124] But Noble's new solution also marked a clear separation between the real world of patriarchal necessities – untouched by the events in the forest – and the fantastical aspects of these events.

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[123] See *Times* 24 Apr 1985 and *Daily Telegraph* 25 Apr 1985, qtd. in Marshall 85: "[T]his Ganymede 'did not simply replace Rosalind in Arden: he ran parallel with her. The two would sometimes collude, sometimes collide and even sometimes betray each other.' Despite, or perhaps because of, the fluidity of gender definitions, the dialogues between Orlando and Rosalind conveyed a significant erotic charge." Very similar observation were made as regards the interaction between Rosalind and Ganymede in Cheek by Jowl's all-male *As You Like It*.

[124] The tableau of the marriage scene on the BBC video taken from the Stratford production seemed to me actually very reminiscent of Elliot's 1961 version with Vanessa Redgrave.

Since the love game in Arden functions as a Jungian psychic impulse to integrate the animus/anima within each figure, it does not allow to read gender as expressions of socially constructed and informed behaviour. In this approach, male and female aggression or submission becomes mythologised, separated from the social context. Consequently, the final marriage scene now is marked by the couples who move backstage *away* from the audience. By leaving the stage through the moon, the characters choose the Arden world of archetypes, for there is no place outside of Arden, where their love and journey could stay alive. This image allows the production to insist on Arden as a utopian space, but problematises it at the same time. Therefore, since psychic dream and social reality cannot get bridged in this image of the actors leaving backwards through the moon, this move also marks the limitation of this production.

Noble's *As You Like It* preceded a number of productions that could not find much hope in Rosalind's holiday humours or erotic desires. John Caird's 1989 production for the RSC eschewed all androgynous glamour from Rosalind. It found "the sources of power and energy […] not […] in Rosalind or the greenwood, but in the world of macho games ruled by men in suits" (Gay, *She* 85). In line with this concept, Sophie Thompson did not try to render erotically empowered Rosalind, much less a manly Ganymede. A similar reading, which challenges received notions of Rosalind as the central figure of the play and focuses on the continuity between court and Arden, was given by Tim Albery in his production at the Old Vic in 1989 (192).

Cheek-by-Jowl's production in 1991 is significant, in so far as it does not subscribe to an antithetic understanding of the debate on subversion and containment. In fact, it challenges those interpretations that proclaim one meaning for the play's narrative and discoursive structure, be it unifying closure, ideological non-closure, or harmonious balance of opposites. This represents a break with almost three hundred

years of performance history. Instead, as we shall see, the show applied a dialectic approach, by which characters and audience members are finally invited to keep the dialectical elements present and derive pleasure and transformative impulses from the games played.

The German performance history of the play differs strongly from the British. It was performed for the first time in 1775 in Biberach, a little town in Southern Germany, where Johann Christoph Martin Wieland lived and worked. He was the first translator of Shakespeare's playtexts into German who did not content himself with a mere narration of the play's story. His friendship with the local duke made Biberach the place of a number of premieres of Shakespeare's plays on the German stage.[125]

Simon Williams remarks that *Wie es euch gefällt* [*As You Like It*] "would not be seen elsewhere for over a century" (54), and his book gives the play only four entries, two concerning its positions in the sequence of translations by Schlegel/Tieck and two concerning the date of its first production. The reason for this failure on the stage seems to be related to German stage practices, for Williams points at a certain "unsuitability of Shakespeare to the purpose of the German court theatre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" due to the "teeming world" in Shakespeare's drama (93). Equally, the stage practices of those days had to struggle with changes of scenery, since the custom was to build illusionistic scenery that was cumbersome to change. Thus, the plays were edited towards that end. Possibly this editing process was responsible for the neglect that *As You Like It* suffered on the German stage before the twentieth century. Hortmann remarks that the play was not staged at the beginning of the twentieth century due to complaints about the arrangement of scenes that resulted in unstageability (8). Otto Falckenberg's production in 1917 – informed very much by music and dance, so

that the last scene "completely dissolved in music, dance, and jubilation" – assured the play a firm place in German repertoire theatre. The director's artistic sensibility makes him note the play's inherent erotic vibration as one that takes the theatrical world beyond the realms of civilization (Hortmann 104):

> […] it is the secret of the play that Orlando recognizes his Rosalind in her male attire, and Rosalind … is happy in the knowledge that Orlando has recognized her. The meaning of the play does not depend on their not recognizing each other but on not admitting it to each other. It is in this way that their disguise creates the condition for a play full of daring and delight. Liberated Eros changes into Pan.[126]

Falckenberg established the notion of Arden as a green world on the German stage, though it turned out to be a much wilder, emotionally archaic Arden than its English counterpart. Falckenberg's pagan interpretation found no followers within Germany's bourgeois humanist universe.[127]

In the 1930s, with the Nazis in power, performances of Shakespearean comedies surpassed by far tragedies and histories. The pressure towards harmless delight and depoliticised interpretation is palpable in descriptions of the performances produced by Hilpert in 1934 at the Deutsches Theater Berlin, who staged the comedy as a light romantic poem in a Rococo style, and even more in Gustaf Gründgens production of 1940 in Berlin, who suffused the play with an overall atmosphere of bucolic delight and detached wisdom. Interestingly enough, after the premiere he decided to cut the final conversion of Duke Frederick's. Political troubles did not fit into this production nor into his professional plans (see Hortman 129-131).

The play received conventional, late romantic renderings during the 1950s and the early 1960s, as the German theatrical landscape was busy affirming traditional

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[125] For a description of the importance of Wieland, see Simon Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage*.

[126] The final sentence appears only in the German edition of Hortman's book (119): "*Eros der befreite wandelt sich in Pan.*"

humanist values on stage. The situation changed during the late 1960s when famous directors such as Claus Peymann, Peter Stein, and Peter Zadek started an artistic revolution. The ideological and political discussions of the decade, heavily informed not only by the rise of political terrorism in Germany but even more by what it stood for, namely the discussion on the moral, institutional and economic continuities between the Third Reich and Post-war Germany, produced an emphasis on the ideological message of a performance. This tendency rendered Arden an increasingly unidyllic place (Hortmann 252), as both Roberto Ciulli's production in 1974 in Cologne and Petrica Ionescu's in 1976 in Bochum showed.[128] Similarily, in the German Democratic Republic, the 1970s saw a tendency towards depoeticizing the universe of *As You Like It*, namely in the translation by Heiner Müller, which was used by Benno Besson to stage an *As You Like It* centered on the relation between parents and children in a feudalist society (Mike Hamburger, in Hortmann 414).

According to Hortmann (252), it was Peter Stein's memorable production in 1977 in Berlin that put imagination back into Arden, without cutting off the darker elements in the forest. Although the production is widely remembered because of its scenery and setting in the CCC film studios in Berlin, which allowed to draw the audience physically much closer to the stage than usual, Hortmann also sees an interpretative openness in the production and concludes that Peter Stein "apparently did not hold with reductive readings à la Ciulli or Ionescu" (274), a view also accepted by Patterson.

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[127] Again not until the 1970s, the decade of the sexual revolution, similar ideas could flourish on the stage, namely in Ionescu's all-male production.

[128] Similarily, Christina Edzard's movie, shot in 1992 during the Thatcher era, did not allow for an escapist Arden and set it in the London docklands. All three productions failed with the audience, possibly because the playtext does not support such a radical anti-pastoral setting (despite its wintery environment and elements in Rosalind's behaviour that could well be termed sadistic), but it seems equally fair to state that audience members are very unwilling to change their received notions of the play as secured by a horizon of romantic-poetic harmony.

Not until 1993, an outstanding director was to produce another memorable rendering of *As You Like It*, when Katharina Thalbach staged her all-male version of Thomas Brasch's rather free translation in Berlin. On the background of late modern concepts of patchwork identity, Thalbach's concept concentrated on the power of playing with gender elements in a swirling love game whose freedom is possible in a space conceded and thus controlled by the rules and rulers of socio-economic realities. As we shall see, Thalbach infuses her production with a slight question mark concerning the possibilities of free play. Finally, social hierarchies will impose an end to it.

It seems that directors in the 1990s tried to seek their "salvation" in hybridisation, some to produce a decadent atmosphere, as Caird in his 1993 production for the RSC, some to energise Shakespeare's play with burlesque elements by exploiting the incongruencies in style and register. Although hybridisation is often criticised as an unduly popularisation of Shakespeare, the stronger criticism seems to me that many of these productions do not reflect symbolically the traditions on which they draw in their hybridization. If they do not include a self-referential discussion of their form, they hardly create a progressive impulse that can question the social context that allows for and produces such play with cultural signs. Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* in 1996 may count as a self-conscious and self-critical example of such hybridisation. Although Thalbach's production contains some incongruent elements, audiences still await such rendering, be it on film or stage, of *As You Like It*.

As described in the Introduction, all-male dramatic productions of Shakespeare's drama may stay in line with modern notions of gender. Judging both by Boas's and Rylance's understanding of the relation between character and actor, such productions manage to do so because they reproduce a modern utopian notion of masculinity as

androgynous, ethereal universality: art and mind, i.e., the sign and the character as text, is everything, materiality and the actor's body is nothing. We shall see that at least Clifford Williams' production of *As You Like It* is still very much informed by these cultural assumptions. It comes to no surprise, then, that he did not conceive of his production as a blurring intervention in and negotiation of the relation between homosexual and heterosexual identities. Whereas the 1960s saw a number of drag acts and especially Top Ten pop-tunes in both Britain and Germany that glamourised transvestism without bringing in the issue of sexual discrimination,[129] the 1970s saw not only a closer (and often purely sensational) association of artistic cross-dressing with homosexuality, but also a growing political consciousness among gays. Homosexuality and heterosexuality, homosexual and heterosexual men, were openly seen as opposing and excluding each other. It became almost impossible, then, to produce an all-male performance without such winking at homosexuality. The vicissitudes of Petrica Ionescu's production in Bochum attest to this renegotiation of male identity and sexuality with all its controversial political implications. During the 1980s, this opposition softened, not the least through the appearance in popular music culture of the figure called "the gender bender", most of all Boy George and his Culture Club. Boy George was the first in pop culture to define his existence beyond sexual orientation as queer and an option for homo- and heterosexuals alike.[130] It is also the decade where postmodernism in the understanding of Jameson and Lyotard as the cultural logic of late capitalism reached a mainstream audience and promoted a discussion on the utopian

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[129] The following description of the popular context of all-male performances in terms of pop music follows informations from chapter six in Baker.

[130] See Baker: "George constantly had to justify his dressing up, and the main question being asked about Boy George soon ceased to be 'is he a he or a she?', and became 'is he or isn't he gay?'". George's reply is astute in putting heterosexual anxieties and their overcoming central: "I don't think it's being gay that's the problem. It's being effeminate. It's being not manly that's the problem. You see, when people accept Boy George they're accepting a million things about themselves. They're not accepting that I'm gay or

qualities of unstable and hybrid identities. From then on, it became easier to play with hybrid identities, to cherish the theatricality of identities in general and of gender in particular. Both Cheek-by-Jowl and Katharina Thalbach could draw on that licence in their versions of *As You Like It*.

As we shall see, the unfixing of dichotomous gender identities can get directed to different ends. The transgressive impulse in all-male dramatic performances of *As You Like It* could intend a reconfiguration of masculinity into almost opposite directions. Especially the treatment of the metatheatrical potentials, which Shapiro calls the possibilities of theatrical vibrancy, as the most salient characteristics in all-male performances differs so significantly that the erotic and political thrust in the chosen productions of *As You Like It* can get derived from directorial approaches to that capacity. For it is through a foregrounding or neglecting of these metatheatrical allusions within cross-dressing that identity is constructed as a hybrid or a unison phenomenon. Within the context of a theatrical narrative in *As You Like It*, that reveals critical impulse towards the unifying political power structure inscribed into this narrative, the stance the production adopts towards the question of identity as unifiable or, by contrast, fundamentally hybrid predetermines the plausible ways to evaluate the function of the erotic potentials with respect to the political regulations in this narrative and most prominently expressed in the marriage scene: whether the production opts for a utopian harmonization of gendered identity, erotic and social relations beyond lived reality; whether it radically denies such harmonization; or whether it tries to negotiate the tension between a somewhat enforced harmony and a powerful eroticised instability. The four productions adapt metatheatrical allusions identified in the playtext to these differing strategies in order to create a complex and yet coherent spectacle.

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straight; they're accepting that a man can act in a different way from how they're expected to act" (in

CHAPTER 4 The Changing Lure of Transgression: All-Male Productions of *As You Like It* on the Late Twentieth-Century Stage in England and Germany

As discussed in chapter 2, all-male performances are believed to produce a peculiar theatrical unstability in terms of identity, which Michael Shapiro terms "theatrical vibrancy." Technically speaking, such unstability depends on a simultaneous awareness in the audience of different layers of identity within a character on stage. In Elizabethan plays, there are usually three layers of identity (male actor; cross-cast female character; cross-disguised female character as male), but in the case of *As You Like It* there is a fourth one, namely the cross-disguised Ganymede treated and imagined as a fictitious "Rosalind" by Orlando and possibly the audience. Following Stallybrass, the unstability of such theatrical figures derives not only from an effected metatheatrical awareness, but from the thwarted attempt to establish what aspect of gender identity is at play in a given moment. Hence, from this point of view, the focus is not simply on all-male casting as making the audience believe in the maleness of the female characters, goading them into "a quintessentially theatrical act of faith,"[131] but equally on the capacity of specific all-male productions to undercut this very act. Or more simply put, the question is not if the production manages to make us forget the male actors on stage, but if it makes us a) forget them, b) just to remind us of them in determinate moments, producing thus an emotionally and imaginarily creative tension.

Moreover, theatrical vibrancy as an artistic blurring of conceptual gender boundaries on stage, or at least as a negotiation of this potential, is not limited to the theatrical construction of a character's gender identity as in Shapiro. As was the case with non-realist mimesis in Elizabethan theatre, within a *dramatic* performance such

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Baker, 249-50).

theatrically vibrant construction of a character is most likely embedded in an alliance with other metatheatrical elements. This possible conjunction confers on the stage reality a conceptual vibrancy, for example between mimetic and non-mimetic elements, between realist and non-realist treatments of human psychology and social reality on stage. Hence, the blurring effects of this theatrical individuality can hardly get separated from the theatrical construction of social reality as a whole, as Sedinger's considerations cited and commented on in the Introduction already suggested. From an epistemological point of view, theatrical vibrancy emphasises uncertainty instead of certainty as regards the gender of the theatrical body on stage, and hence emotional risk instead of security. Its unstable and ambiguous codings not only allow audience members to relate in different, personal ways to the theatrical moment, but in their ambiguity they consciously develop such moments as challenges to clear-cut audience expectations. This means it puts its "truth" into the eye of the beholder, while equally challenging the certainty in the look of any given "eye." In doing so, theatrical vibrancy produces a notion of reality whose inclusiveness depends on the communication of the audience members to negotiate their different points of view. It challenges audience members to perceive their differences as part of the same "whole" – a structure more assumed than proven. In this impulse towards what I would call a *unity in disput*e, we can locate the pedagogical and political[132] impetus of productions that attempt to produce theatrical vibrancy.

As a strategy to blur the gender identity of a character, this type of vibrancy has consequences for the erotic effects spawned by such theatrical construction. It produces an object of desire that is fantasised as much as it is real on stage (see Stallybrass,

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[131] See Donnellan in his talk to Dominic Cavendish (*Independent*, 4 Jan 1995).
[132] In the very basic meaning of "political", as those subject matters that concern the *polis*, the social community, of which the spectators are part.

"Transvestism"). In the context of this effect, the productions can direct the attention and fantasies of audience members to a) the erotic encounters on stage, and b) to the audience's own emotional engagement in the theatrical action. In both cases, "a mixture of titillation and confusion" (Marshall 89) is produced if theatrical vibrancy fully entails an erotic vibrancy. Yet, the critical attention in this context lies on the question of to what extent the staged interplay of desire, fantasy and knowledge of the actors' and characters' sexes confounds modern and late modern notions of sexuality as a non-moralist means to analyse the kind of erotic object choice presented on stage.

Finally, the reception and evaluation of these effects and their theatrical language by the audience happen against a horizon of hegemonic moral and socio-political norms. It is here that the question of a production's transgressive potential comes in, namely in what way the implicit norms of a production are complicit with or point beyond a historically given socio-cultural and moral context. The three categories of a modern, late modern and postmodern context help to analyse this interplay and describe the cultural function of each production within the respective historic contexts and within the cultural dynamics of England and Germany in general. Therefore, I divide my analysis of these all-male performances into three sections: the theatrical production of identity, the erotic strategies and effects produced by their respective theatricality, and the interplay between theatricality and the socio-political context as affirmed or destabilised in these productions. With such division of the chapter by analytical categories rather than by production, I intend not only to link the detailed case studies to a clear theoretical research question, but to strengthen the dynamic relation between each theatrical analytical category and the wider cultural context. Moreover, the clear possibility to relate the results in each analytical category – theatrical, erotic and socio-political vibrancy – to the cultural dynamics from modern through late

modern to postmodern cultural regulations, allows the reading of the productions not as isolated works of theatrical art whose significance is contained in themselves, but as theatre which actively participates and intervenes in its respective cultural context.

4.1 Theatrical Vibrancy: Negotiating Identity Through Gender and Other Theatrical Signs

4.1.1 Purifying Hybridity: Clifford Williams' Sublime Androgyneity

When the curtain lifted and the audience was presented with the court of Duke Frederick, what it saw in Clifford Williams' production with the National Theatre at the Old Vic in 1967 was an almost bare stage, whose back was marked by a transparent plexiglass wall. On stage a few geometrical forms, half pyramids and half conic cubes, gave the place a cleanliness that recalls the formal language of minimal art (see appendix C), which saw its most creative and popular period exactly in the middle of the 1960s. Artists like Donald Judd, D. Flavin and Sol Le Witt, among others, created aesthetics in reaction to the emotionality and chaos in happenings and abstract expressionism (see Gablik). Ralph Koltai's set design follows these principles by establishing on stage pure and functional forms, clear lines for objects whose materiality does not expose marks of everyday usage but merely serves as material support for a formal language that suppresses the residues of human individuality and lived reality. Recalling Sol Le Witt's dictum (qtd in Smith, Roberta 261) that ultimately only ideas can be works of art, the set design gives the production from the beginning a strong intellectual and idealist, almost anti-corporeal thrust. It is the first and already massive indication that, despite the provocative erotic potential of his all-male project, Williams was not interested in this all-male performance as a form of subversive body politics. Given the rational slant in minimal art, he and his set designer made clear that their

interest lay in the intellectual, not the physical intricacies of this theatrical device. Judged with hindsight by our contemporary standards, Williams' approach to the play is rather conservative, pointing backwards to romantic ideals of perfection as unity and purity, instead of pushing the staged body into the realm of increased polymorphous corporality and of a morally and consequently politically provocative usage of the body. As we shall see in 4.3.1, however, this strong emphasis on the mind instead of the body, on art instead of nature, was received as an exciting transgression of identity regulations as put forward by both bourgeois and anti-bourgeois humanist or "hippie" positions.

Williams' conception of the play, as put forward in his "Production Note" and published in the programme, allows one to affirm that the scenery expressed well his approach to the playtext. In the Note he not only endorses "an all-male staging of *As You Like It* [that is] rooted organically in a belief about the nature of the play" (13), but what's more, Williams assumes the play to "conjure up a time of magical release from material dominion which is as much part of the dreaming of our own age as of myth and legend." As we have seen, a Restoration public almost certainly would have found this interpretation an absurd enterprise. Romantic audiences would probably have partially agreed with him,[133] whereas Victorians went after the magical release from daily life. Equally, Williams does not consider the interpretations that focused on the socio-economic hardships in the forest of Arden. Hence, Williams' interpretation of the play is far from being "natural", nor is it "organically" rooted in the playtext, although one can concede the overall conceptual consistency of his approach.

By his choice of words (organically, conjure up, magical) as well as the unilateral direction of this dream (release from material dominion), Williams sets the

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[133] Although one could argue that Romantics did not desire to be released from material dominion, but to free this dominion from oppressive structures, so that its inherent pleasures and richness could get experienced.

terms for his interpretation of the play in a psychic landscape, more Jungian than Freudian. He imbues his approach with a flair of naturalness, but most of all infuses it with transcendental essentialism as the "organic" utopia of human desire. This slant towards love as an expression of angelic purity and not polymorphous sexuality is nowhere more obvious than in the concretisation of what he takes as the central message of the play. "The examination of the infinite beauty of Man in love – which lies at the very heart of *As You Like It* – takes place in an atmosphere of spiritual purity which transcends sensuality in the search for poetic sexuality. 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."[134] Williams constructs a relation between his concept and Jan Kott's, by which he accepts the metaphysical interpretation of gender disguise as pointing towards angelic androgyny, but suppresses its sensual aspects – the stimulation of erotic fantasies and physical desire – as mere surface elements.[135] This central quote not only expresses the traditional bourgeois utopia of love in Williams' production, as revealed by notions such as "Man in love", characterised by "Infinite Beauty", and searching for "interior truth", all pointing at a metaphysical love object and ultimately at an underlying transcendental essentialism in love, it also proposes to understand the

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[134] Kennedy (257) discusses this quote in a slightly distorted version, for he omits square brackets to indicate that he left out a few words. Moreover, Williams' investigation, in Kennedy's words, is carried out "in an atmosphere of spiritual purity that transcends *sexuality*" (my italics). Kennedy's omission puts things straight, for it avoids to confuse the reader with Williams' vague and problematic notion of "poetic sexuality". Since Kennedy does not analyse this paradoxical concept and its utopian function for the performance, he can affirm – against Williams' intention – that "the transgendered casting certainly underlined sexual confusion and questions of personal identity, implying a darker, Kottian view of human relationships" (…). My discussion of Williams' "search for poetic sexuality" should provide grounds not to follow Kennedy in his supposition, or at least justify a questioning of his adverb "certainly."

[135] Indeed, Williams' distance from Kott goes further than any critic could imagine in 1967. In 1974, Williams gave an interview to the *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 July 1974) on the occasion of a revival of his production with a modified all-male cast in the US in which he put matters straight: "We [he and designer Koltai] read Kott's essay and decided it was absolutely daft. […] We became obsessed with the philosophic concept but we couldn't come up with an artistic reason to use an all-male cast. […] Like all of Kott's essays, I think this one […] was written primarily to stimulate controversy." It seems that the wide-spread controversy surrounding Kott's essay provided at least an economic reason to stage an all-male production.

exclusion of sensuality as a process of overcoming and surpassing, hence an elevation to the sublime. The phrase "poetic sexuality", which brings together what Kott keeps apart as a productive, painful and teasing tension, namely intellectual ideality and physical passion, suggests exactly such predominance of the poetic element over the sexual: the poetic qualifies the sexual, modifies it, constrains it. As we shall see in 4.2.1, Williams avoids an understanding of poetic language in *As You Like It* as a sexualised one, as a kind of sexualised or eroticising poetry. Love, in Williams' production, is fulfilled by the marriage of true minds, not the union of minds and bodies. Such understanding, of course, has fundamental consequences for the theatrical construction of the actors' stage figures, as we shall see in a moment.

The decision to purify the physical ambiguity of all-male casting also pervades the programme. Ultimately, this small booklet suggests that the production is best linked to the tradition of poetic drama and reproduces the anti-theatricalists' objections to the all-male stage as the product of a specific hysteria about the corrupting effect of the theatre. Against the improbability of such effect, the programme sets prominently a traditional view of the moral gain in boys playing female parts. Not only figure Granville-Barkers' and Guy Boas' evaluations of the boy-actor's poetic capacity prominently at the beginning of the programme, it also ends its evaluation of the Shakespearean boy-actor with Desmond McCarthy's stress on the asexual and poetic quality of the transvestite Shakespearean stage, which works towards what might be called an emotionally and erotically disinterested pleasure in the spectator when watching the performance.[136] The presentation of the drag tradition focuses on the

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[136] The key sentences as quoted in the programme are: "The effect of that convention was, *by diminishing personal interest*, to direct the attention of the spectator towards the character impersonated rather than upon the impersonator. […] And it may be of some significance that the decline of poetical drama, to which that technique was so admirably suited, begins when women begin to take women's parts" (8 my italics). The supposed distancing of the audience from emotional involvement separates this attitude from

formal artistic and intellectual pleasure that one can derive from that theatricality. If there is any affective reaction involved, it is never directed at or instigated by the male bodies on stage, but rather by the now purportedly genderless actors' brilliance to make the words sparkle. The attraction lies in the piece of art, a spiritual attraction towards an abstract love, not in the hybrid interface between physicality and imagination, between playtext, character, and actor. This is in line with Williams' conception of what the play is "naturally" about.

At first glance the programme gives a varied and somewhat balanced account of what it calls the "drag tradition" in Elizabethan and modern productions of Shakespeare's drama. However, the choice and organisation of the quotations reveal a clear tendency to descandalise the all-male Shakespearean stage and to "poeticise" it. A similar strategy is applied when it comes to Kott's essay, whose hints towards a utopia of liberated sensual pleasures regardless of the sex of the love object[137] are played down by Williams' own production note printed right before the excerpts from Kott's essay. Williams' conclusive remark "Prosody before pelvises" is a rhetorically witty confession regarding the all-inclusive cultural value of language. Indirectly, he invokes the ideal of poetic drama.

Sadly enough, there exists no video of the performance, which makes it impossible to appraise from my position whether at least momentarily a contradictory blurring of gender was achieved. The effect of theatrical vibrancy is such that it can hardly be perceived on photographs, for it is produced mainly by a shifting of attention,

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Greenblatt's idea of fiction as friction. Although in both concepts Shakespeare's drama is predominantly verbal, for Greenblatt the sparkling verbal variety expresses most of all a very physical quality and intention in the comedies, not a poetical one. Or rather, the poetic and the very physical erotic quality cannot get separated as defenders of poetical drama, as McCarthy and Boas might have.

[137] For Kott, the Renaissance notion of androgyneity as encapsulated in the habit of using boy-actors conveys both polymorphous sexuality and neo-platonic ideality. Together, they form the two aspects of the "dream of love free from the limitations of sex", as Kott is cited somewhat too generalised in the programme.

and the sudden insight that what has been taken as "real" is just one theatrical layer among others. Hence, I must infer mainly from the press reviews if theatrical vibrancy was achieved and when, as well as how it was produced. These reviews provide ample material to argue against the existence of theatrical vibrancy on stage.

Since the character of Rosalind, in its various layers of identity, is the one most prone to produce what Shapiro calls a theatrical "figure of mysterious depths", it is worth to analyse Ronald Pickup's performance, even more so since his performance was considered "the foundation on which [the] production rests" (Hobson, *Sunday Times*, 8 Oct 1967). During rehearsals, the gender associations in the interplay between Rosalind and Celia convinced at least one visitor: Jan Kott himself, who decided that although the male actors are playing "as women and developing the relationship as women, you can sense the maleness coming through. The polarity is there." (Pearson, *Sunday Times*, 1 Oct 1967). Despite the fact that Kott's perception may not constitute an example of theatrical vibrancy in so far as we do not know to what extent his term "polarity" covers a phenomenon of gender vibrancy that implies the difficulty to decide what kind of gender identity is involved in a given moment, it does at least point at such possibility. In performance, however, the impression seems to have been different.

Given Williams' concept of the production that went for gender neutrality, it comes to no surprise that the show does not play around with the multiple identities inherent in the cross-casting as well as the cross-dressing narrative. Philip French (*New Statesman*, 13 Oct 1967) even got the impression that "the production would not be significantly altered without them [the cross-cast actors]". The relative unimportance of the actor's sex on stage is confirmed by *The Sunday Telegraph* (8 Oct 1967), whose critic notes that Pickup's Rosalind "is the one most clinically drained of sensuality" and the critic of the *Press & Journal Aberdeen* (14 Oct 1967) remarks that "the comedy of

Rosalind having to masquerade as Ganymede goes for nothing since Ronald Pickup in the part merely resumes his own off-stage sex". In a similar vein, *The Christian Science Monitor* (Oct 1967) writes that Pickup "makes no effort to imitate a woman. He speaks with his natural voice, and moves with his natural walk." Or in other words, in opposition to Kott's impression during rehearsals, for the critics the difference between the actor and the cross-disguised character got blurred to an such extent that they saw an actor playing the male character Ganymede, but not Rosalind who in turn plays Ganymede. Judging by these reviews, Pickup's performance does not seem to have succeeded in keeping the various layers of theatrical identities alive and in tension in the mind of the spectators.[138]

In line with the impression of a predominantly male Ganymede, but in contrast to the purported absence of sensuality, Milton Shulman (*The Evening Standard*, 4 Oct 1967) reports of "nuances of homosexual attraction between Orlando and Ganymede," expressing, thus, a certain unease about the concomitant tension in Rosalind-as-Ganymede's identity. In his subsequent sceptical comment on the absent physicality and passion of Pickup's performance as a lover, he gives an interesting example of critical vibrancy, in that he demands more physical passion but wants this passion to work towards sexual and gender neutrality, not homosexual innuendos. He writes: Ronald Pickup is never able to convey that all-consuming love Rosalind must have for Orlando to justify the thesis that absolute love is absolutely neuter." Shapiro's concept of theatrical vibrancy, however, is alien to the thesis of absolute love as something pure, spiritual and neuter. If there is absolute love involved in this concept of a theatrical blurring of fixed identities and promoting gender unstability, then it lies in the pleasure

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[138] For an impression of Pickup's appearance on stage, see appendices E, F, and G. The fotos make clear that Pickup as Ganymede shows very little "feminine" attitudes. Moreover, one can sense the power of

that the experience of shifting gender identities may allow, either literally or symbolically as one representation of human totality. Equally for Robert MacDonald from *The Scotsman* (9 Oct 1967), Pickup's not hiding his male sex is responsible for the fact that "the play has become not so much a tale of idealised, sexual love, as a 'Drag' comedy."

Taking into account critical attitudes such as Shulman's and MacDonald's, the homosexual innuendos in the performance affirm Williams' failure to use the all-male cast convincingly to bring on stage his idea of *As You Like It* as a play about absolute, i.e., pure spiritual love. Strictly speaking, it is not the homosexual innuendo, but the sexual innuendo that spoils Williams' project. The idea to produce a quasi asexual and bodiless performance of *As You Like It* on stage is countered by the most rudimentary physical realities of theatrical performances, namely the existence of human beings on stage. Despite his intentions, Williams' production did not succeed in rendering the physical body on stage a neutral sign.

Hence, as far as theatrical vibrancy is concerned, it seems fair to surmise that Williams never wanted to create this effect of mysterious depth. Instead, his interest lies in testing the possibility of performing trans-gender purity in a version of *As You Like It*. Apparently, judging by the reviews, the production did not take advantage of possible metatheatrical gestures (see Zimmermann 47) in order to instigate gender ambiguity as opposed to gender neutrality. Martin Esslin, writing for the *New York Times* on Rosalind's and Celia's lack of sensuality and sexual ambiguity, calls this a lack of a "Genet-like allure". The link between sexual ambiguity and Genet that Esslin constructs loses its cryptic quality if we recall how Jan Kott interpreted the function of transvestism for Genet: "Transvestism […] for Genet offered the supreme opportunity

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the pervasive futurist, plastic atmosphere of the stage that distances the show from the English tradition of

for subversion. To mimic the opposite sex (or race) constitutes the greatest profanation of all, because, as Artaud writes, on stage bodies and feelings become compounded. 'To play love is to imitate love, but to mimic love is to demystify love, to mimic power is to demystify power, to mimic ritual is to demystify ritual.'" (Jan Kott, *Theatre Notebooks* 268, qtd in Senelick 10.)

Genet's strategy towards subversion is based on a tactical use of the cross-cast actor's body as a means for gender mimicry, which I understand, in the light of Kott's quote, as an impulse to mock the hegemonic discourse on gender by ironically exposing its repressed contents. Genet does want not to voice his discontent through a utopian harmony in which the disparate status of its elements is overcome by their growing abstraction towards the level of the sublime. Williams, on the contrary, is overtly interested in the possibility of an all-male cast to achieve sublimity. The critical reactions suggest that he did not intend to demystify bourgeois love and show how masculine and feminine identities, men and women, even in the moments when they are most in love, are still in the grip of physical passion and embedded within social regulations. He did not want to foreground the theatrical production of gender, nor was he interested in the fate of the body and its desires, in producing moments of polymorphous sexuality that clash with both bourgeois moral discipline and spiritual idealism. Rather, Williams wanted to render these categories translucent, and to corroborate that possibility, he fused them into sexless and genderless figures, whose best function may have been to revive the utopia of the universality of human feelings. Milton Shulman's impression that the performance's credo was "a bas [sic] difference!" (*Evening Standard*, 4 Oct 1967) correctly defines its goal, but the strategy to abolish gender difference was elevation to the sublime. Williams' overall theatrical intention

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the cross-dressed Dame (on a historical description of this tradition, see Baker).

was not to produce theatrical vibrancy, but to produce poetic purity in the forest of Arden. And the picture of the final wedding scene, taken in rehearsal and printed in the programme (see appendix D), does suggest that the spiritual atmosphere of Arden grew into a harmonious tableau that showed couples and courtiers organically united and framed, furthermore, by the ideality of "Marc Wilkinson's exquisite counter-tenor song which Hymen sings for the sophisticated in Arden."[139] As it seems, the atmosphere was meant to console the civilised world and fulfil finally its romantic longings in an overall angelic setting, following Williams' belief that his age was in need of such purified love, freed from material dominion. We do not know how Pickup spoke the epilogue and what effect it had on the relation between dream-like Arden, the world of the court and the real world of the spectators. It seems likely that the audience stuck with Rosalind's "If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you that had beards that pleased me" (V.4.214-216) as a form of waving good-bye to this poetic dream, without noticing the complicated interplay of theatricality and social reality in the lines.

Of course, neither Pickup's nor the other actors' stage identities complied easily with the demands of traditional bourgeois masculinity. Their presence on stage was surrounded by anxiety and condescension. Yet, the relieved emphasis voiced in the reviews in face of the production's sexual purity can be clearly traced back to the harmony between Williams' dramatic conception and some founding moral principles of bourgeois identity, especially the backgrounding of sensuality but also the separation of love and sexuality from social regulations.[140] This overall impression is

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[139] Only Hilary Spurling constructs a relation between the wedding scene and Duke Ferdinand's treacherous court that could problematise that ending. She suggests a link between Hymen's and the courtier's dresses and Soviet military uniforms. Given the overall slant of her review, she was interested in defending British theatre from the influence of Eastern Europe, a factor that casts some doubts on her association, since the performance as a whole is not infused with such political language. To me, the association seems to be a result of Spurling's own creative projection.

[140] The timeless and abstract set designed by Ralph Koltai enforces these disjunctions.

predominantly due to Pickup's Rosalind, whose interpretation seemed to have had the effect of producing a socially decontextualised woman, a female figure more appropriate to male fantasies of ideal femininity than to a representation of living females. An impression suggested at least by J.W. Lambert's comment that Pickup's "luminous purity of line does suggest that […] women players […] have acquired what might be called an excess of femininity; not content with being women, they have fallen into the way of behaving 'womanishly' to a quite unnecessary degree" (19). We don't know what Lambert's criteria for a "necessary degree" would be, but clearly Williams' men made in fact better women for spectators such as Lambert who seem to prefer idealisations to representations of femininity that let shine through a more conventionalised and hence socially infused form of femininity. If Pickup's "sexlessly rare spirit" (Lambert) is truly feminine, then the "womanish" performance style should be either one that affirms as an integral part of female existence a strong sensuality and emotionality or that insists on femininity as being infused by concrete female power positions (or their absence). Pickup's performance serves Lambert to demand a woman's acting that does not call attention to real women's difficulties to cope with their social position and their subsequent feelings. As a woman who gets rid of this excess of femininity, Rosalind expresses the values of men like Lambert and behaves to a large extent like a woman for whom her sex and gender are irrelevant to make sense of her experience. As such, she is ultimately an intellectually sensitive (poetical!) version of universal man, or as Lambert puts it: "Making no attempt to impersonate the feminine in either his figure or his voice, Mr. Pickup plays with a shining clarity, and distils a sexlessly rare spirit" (19). Lambert's male fantasy of ideal womanhood proves once more how this dream of poetic existence ideally renders women invisible and men spiritual. Therefore, Williams' production also fails to problematise masculinity in its

social constructedness and to discuss on stage how *As You Like It* could be meaningful as a comment on existing social relations. Consequently, the figure of Orlando remains traditional, described as convincingly energetic and robust.

It is instructive that Lambert does not feel likewise as regards the other versions of femininity in the performance. The other cross-cast men did not follow Pickup's acting and produced a performance of female characters informed by cultural codes that deny the sublimation of materiality its supposed naturalness (see appendix H): "Charles Kay's Celia […] a very camp lady, sardonic and sharp. […] Richard Kay's Phoebe […] veered much further in the direction of female performance and begat in me the only stirrings of uneasiness felt during the performance. […] Anthony Hopkins' bumpkin Audrey was […] straight out of the music-hall and pantomime tradition" (20). Strictly speaking, like Pickup, these three actors do not represent "real women." But their versions of male fantasies had at least the potential to start a discussion on the relation between gender and regulating social norms that could go beyond Lambert's demand for a balanced presentation of women. Lambert perceived the danger, stating that the acting experiment with men as women embodied in Rosalind's performance "is somewhat confused by the fact that all other men playing women do so in different styles." This remark reveals how strongly Lambert saw Pickup's performance as presenting something "essentially" feminine, namely some well-composed and unified naturalness. But the performance did not work as to start a discussion about the effect of that incongruity, a discussion that would have had to entail a foregrounding evaluation of the fascinating gender uncertainty in a minor character as Phoebe.[141]

One dissenting critic, however, deserves extra attention. Martin Gottfried writes about his impression of the performance that "there is no sexual mixup; everybody is a

fag, plain and simple" (102). He concurs on the absence of what Shapiro would call theatrical vibrancy, but instead of buying in the theatrical illusion of insubstantial masculinity and femininity, i.e. of identity and love as ultimately sexless, he insists on the production being "entirely homosexual" (102). That is, ultimately he bases his interpretation on the unforgettable presence of the actors' male bodies. If Kott invites the audience to fantasise on a stage body compounded of a male body with female attributes and Williams suggests forgetting about the body altogether, Gottfried insists on the actors' body as the first and ultimate reality of the performance. According to him, not only the female roles are "played by actors trying to look like queens. Moreover, the males in the play are characterised as either fags or fag parodies of males as empty-headed studs" (102). It is difficult to share Gottfried's impression of Ganymede as a drag queen, Celia as an "absolute queen" (whatever that was meant to be), or Orlando as an empty-headed stud, whose stupidity only makes him believe that Ganymede is a straight man and not a drag queen. Gottfried's descriptions are so far away from what pictures tell (see, for example, appendices E and F) and the vast majority of reviewers perceived that it seems advisable to regard them as a private impression, not to say obsession. One assumption of this private impression seems to be that men who engage in cross-dressing with each other on stage automatically present homosexuality as opposed to heterosexuality, instead of discussing theatrically the nature of sexuality and its relation with the imaginative faculties. In this arguably self-imposed limitation, Gottfried clearly mirrors the bourgeois notion of sexuality as a binary concept with heterosexuality as its normalised version.

What Williams' overt intentions and Gottfried's quirky reception have in common is an understanding of identity that does not allow the blurring of sexual

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[141] Philip French (*New Statesman*, 13 Oct 1967), for example, calls it "all in all then, a fascinating, rich

identities and the production of a theatrical identity that adopts different sexual impulses at different moments. Yet, Gottfried's criticism at least reveals a latent potential of this all-male cast production to confound actor and character that had to be staved off through a ridiculing criticism. We can detect this repression of ambiguity in Gottfried's own criticism, when he writes on Rosalind's appearance, first as Ganymede and then as herself: "Since she [Rosalind] is being played as a fag we see this romance as a homosexual game, a humiliation of the heterosexual. […] Certainly his [sic! Gottfried thinks of actor Pickup] relationship with Celia (whom Charles Kay plays as an absolute queen) is entirely fag" (287). Gottfried cannot decide whether to concentrate on character or actor. With total absence of self-consciousness, the critic jumps between both. He can do so since, to him, both actor and character produce fag performances. It might be a Freudian mistake, but in Gottfried's unconscious assumptions Pickup not only plays, but becomes a fag.

Furthermore, the interpretation that a homosexual game is a "humiliation of the heterosexual" gives Gottfried away as someone who holds reductionist modern assumptions on masculinity. Therefore, although he is the only critic to blend in his writing Rosalind's different gender identities on stage, he does not allow this confusion to challenge his own modern bourgeois aesthetics. One could go so far as to infer from his phobic reaction that he actually perceives a theatrical or erotic vibrancy, which he has to suppress subsequently, because it challenges his own assumption about masculinity. Instead, he insists on a male essentialism that forces him to read the production in the tradition of mimetic realism as simply homosexual.

In general, however, as far as single characters and the discoursive structure of the play as a whole are concerned, the intention to focus the production on love as

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and as yet somewhat inchoate production," without trying to become explicit about the inchoateness.

sexless was meant to render the actor's and character's sex irrelevant. It destroyed the potential to foreground an enigmatically gendered theatrical figure on stage, but in doing so the production succeeded with the majority of critics and became a huge commercial success. Since the focus was on identity as poetic identity, i.e., an identity harmonised in terms of gender as well as physical desire, the production engaged in a repression of the male body (apart from the exclusion of the female body) which alone can release the mind to its utopian flight, namely to carry the human being into the paradise of poetry where, according to this utopian dream, perfection lies.[142] It is no coincidence that Clive Barnes (*New York Times*, 6 July 1968) writes about Pickup's Rosalind "that this lanky, touching figure is a man […] and you see him as a soul in love", not as a passionate human being. For the basic enthusiasm of the leading character in this production is not to embrace the other's body, but to get entangled in feelings produced by the erotics of language and poetic drama that have no real object, neither man nor woman. Williams' characters reflect the modernist version of the Romantic utopian vision of poetical existence.

4.1.2. Diversifying Universality: Ionescu's Sexualised Masculinity

Williams' production referred to Kott only to insinuate how wrong he was in his conclusions on the necessary bisexual effect of an all-male *As You Like It*. To achieve that, Williams' approach was to test acting conventions, since he believed that an all-male cast would better serve his intention to revive "the purity at the heart of the play," transcending the socio-political and socio-psychological regulations inscribed in its love thematics. Thus, traditional conceptions of the play and its characters received a modern

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[142] At least one critic openly sneered at Williams' devaluation of the body as surface reality, namely J.C. Trewin in the *Birmingham Post* (5 Oct 1967). His/her eyes clearly missed the female surface realities on stage.

formal treatment. In sharp contrast to this theatrical sensibility, Petrica Ionescu's production at the Schauspielhaus Bochum seemed to have demonstrated, as we shall see, little interest in the metatheatrical potential of an all-male cast and a self-conscious blurring of gender identities. Instead, it is marked by a strong anti-bourgeois impulse whose dynamics allowed little complex individuality for the characters. We do not know if Ionescu was directly influenced by Kott. But in face of this production, he certainly shared with Kott's book an interest in how the instinctual aspects of human existence get released when Shakespeare's characters leave civilisation and move into the realm of nature. If Williams followed Kott in his belief that Arden is Arcadia, a sphere where alienation is turned into a sublime perfection, Ionescu seemingly preferred the other side of this medal: Arden as a "bitter Arcadia" where the human desire for sublime totality is not only terribly mocked, but turned inside out, so that the repressed visceral impulses can appear.

In an unpublished letter, Wilhelm Hortmann writes on Ionescu's production: "*Die rein männliche Besetzung spielte damals noch nicht wie heute auf unsichere Geschlechterrollen an, die Möglichkeiten des Spiels mit der Androgynität wurden nicht ausgeschöpft, nicht einmal angedeutet, wahrscheinlich gar nicht erkannt.*"[143] Actor Werner Eggenhofer, who played Celia in this production, remembers that he himself had missed oscillations between masculine and feminine identities and states that the production hardly tried to construct a tension between different layers of identity.[144] To him, if there was a foregrounding of the male actor's body, it happened in a very blunt, uncouth way, as in the final wedding scene in which all actors took off their clothes and engaged in a Viennese waltz lead by the married couples, with nothing but a leather

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[143] "the all-male cast did not refer to unstable gender roles as it does nowadays; the possibilities of this play with androgyny were not exploited, not even suggested, probably not even recognised." Unpublished letter to the author, 28 Oct 03.

codpiece stripped on their loins. Ernst Konarek, who played Touchstone, mentions that actors did not really bother about ambiguous or evasive gender impressions on stage. “The concept was rather to lie down, jump on, and shag”.[145]

Against these impressions stands a public letter to the editor of the *Ruhr-Nachrichten* in Dortmund, in which Knut Koch, the actor who played Rosalind, expresses his indignation in face of public hostility towards this production. In this letter, he claims: *“Wir haben Shakespeare’s Text nicht sinnverkehrt, es ist alles so doppeldeutig gemeint, wie wir es darstellen.”*[146] However, there are reasons to believe that this “we” refers in fact only to Koch himself and the implications in his impersonation of Rosalind. There are reasons to belief that the production did not put on stage ambiguously gendered identities, but male identities that were deliberately meant to exceed bourgeois masculinity. The exciting transgressive project of the production is located in the theatrical images to make palpable this excess as a “natural” element of masculinity, and bourgeois masculinity as an artificial and destructive straight-jacket.

Eggenhofer, for example, surmises that Ionescu was not interested at all in the theatrical potential of the all-male cast to interrogate fixed gender roles, especially female ones. In fact, it is possible that the director had difficulties with the idea, since it was originally Werner Schroeter who wanted to bring out an all-male version of *As You Like It* in Bochum. Yet, Schroeter had to step down from his office as director shortly before rehearsals started due to illness.[147] When Ionescu was comissioned to take over on very short notice, he had to accept the all-male cast.

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[144] Interview with the author, 12 Feb 04
[145] Interview with the author, 12 May 04.
[146] “We have not twisted the meaning of Shakespeare’s text. Everything is meant as ambiguous as we perform it” (*Ruhr-Nachrichten*, 12 Jun 1976).
[147] Werner Schroeter is, together with Rosa von Praunheim, one of the most famous and controversial gay film-makers in Germany. At that time, he was an intimate friend of Knut Koch, who played Rosalind in Ionescu’s production. In fact, Knut Koch was the only main actor to survive the change of directorship, since Schroeter thought of bringing his own cast with him. One can only speculate on Schroeter’s

After arriving in Bochum, the expression he repeated again and again for the actors to convey his idea was "Shakespeare – psychoterapeutique doc."[148] We can infer from this motto that the production's focus was critical of bourgeois sexuality, the repression inscribed in it, and intended to present *As You Like It* as a play about sexual liberation. As we shall see, this focus on sexuality, together with the all-male cast, implied a discussion of *male* sexuality, only. The production had serious problems to bring a female sexuality on stage that was not conceived through a male gaze and hence objectified.

The production started conventionally with a court in which physical strength and cruelty ruled. After losing the wrestling match, the wrestler Charles got strung up from the ceiling where he had to remain until the rest of the scene like a dead animal. However, Ionescu denies a sharp contrast between court and Arden. The Duke's party in Arden was depicted as a bunch of idiots, thinking more about debauchery than keeping up good manners. In both court and Arden ruled a Duke with his men, and if the court is marked by sadistic pleasures, Arden maintains the obsession with power positions in the erotic sphere. For the erotic encounters of the male-female couples from lower social rank, those that involved inhabitants of the forest were marked by eruptive sexual acitivity with little time for emotional exchange. These scenes were not only infused with a "lack of love and tenderness",[149] but also mirrored in its swift "jump-on-and-shag" attitude (Konarek) a pornographic sexuality shot through with impulses of domination and subordination. In the performance, the female figures never took on the

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conception, but judging by Schroeter's general aesthetics, it seems probable that he would have explored the ambiguous potential of cross-dressing on stage in a more refined way than Ionescu did. See Koch's autobiography *Barfuß bin ich dein Prinz* on his time as actor and gay callboy.

[148] Konarek, Interview, 12 May 04. The whole production process was seriously complicated by the fact that Paris-based Ionescu was Rumanian and did not speak German. Company and director needed a translator to communicate.

[149] Konarek, Interview, 12 May 04.

active "upper" position, so that the sexual encounters in Arden mirrored the most conventionalised sexuality within bourgeois society. The encounters between Rosalind and Orlando must have been alien to both court and Arden. Hence, the overall impression suggested by the production was that the play deals not with a dichotomy between civilisation and nature, but that a run down civilisation and its rules is all pervasive and all-encompassing.

The acting style in Arden was shrill, openly grotesque.[150] The characters in Arden (with the possible exception of Rosalind and Celia, see below) behaved rather mechanically, as if driven by an uncontrollable overflow of either sadistic, erotic or neurotic impulses. Orlando was depicted as a timid and repressed figure who stuttered out of unexpressable (sexual?) excitement when being caught by Jaques hanging his sonnets on fictitious trees. Jaques' appearance was not only one of a melancholic, but infused by a general contemptuous vocal shrillness that allowed little psychological reading. In face of these histrionic exaggerations, Hortmann speaks of a "reductive reading [which] precluded all versions of pastoral" (250). Irrespective of gender characteristics, the grotesque acting style worked towards presenting de-humanised figures and Arden as a world of isolated, instinctive egos, out of touch and unable to communicate with one another. In the final wedding scene, all actors undressed almost completely and, as mentioned above, danced with their respective partners to the music of a Viennese waltz entitled "*Es muss ein Stück vom Himmel sein*".[151] This marks the marriage scene as a complete change of acting style, atmosphere and identity concepts on stage. It characterises not only a rejuvenated human identity, but given the nudity of the actors as a physical stepping out of character, it also suggested that the production's

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[150] Both Eggenhofer and Konarek confirmed independently from each other that the production could only work through this exposure of grotesqueness, as if Jarry's *Ubu Roi* met Shakespeare's Arden. For a visual impression of characters in Arden, see appendices K (top) and M.

interest was in masculinity and in showing a homosocial (and possibly homosexual) male world as well as the cruel power relations that uphold it: the repressed inner truth of bourgeois society.

The actors Eggenhofer, Konarek and Hans Hirschmüller,[152] the latter playing the usurping duke, remember that Ionescu brought a woman on stage during the Arden scenes. Interestingly enough, she had to stay imprisoned in a cage like "an animal turned human. She was beautiful to look at, extraordinaly wild, exotic and erotic. It simply turned you on" (Hirschmüller). This beast-of-prey-like woman left the cage in the wedding scene to perform the part of god Hymen, and all ended up in a Viennese waltz. Against bourgeois one-sided masculinity, Ionescu seemed to have conceived what might be called a liberated masculinity, through the fusion of masculine and feminine impulses, but deferred its realisation to the wedding moment. Nature in Arden was no feminine realm endowed with healing powers, no "green world." Within this context, Ganymede's promise to bring Rosalind on stage in flesh and blood[153] confirms the exceptional conceptual gender status of Rosalind in this production, as the character who is not affected by this one-sided masculinity and as such can bring about a truly human figure. However, in face of the realisation in the wedding scene, this "*leibhaftig*" gets an ironic quality that is typical of the production's unilateral interest in male sexuality and of its ultimately traditional way to treat gender as a category of differentiation: "in flesh and blood" means male, even if finally perceived as a manliness cured from bourgeois reductionist distortions. The moments of gender vibrancy are transformed into moments of polymorphous masculinity. Such all-inclusive masculinity once more subsumes female qualities to affirm its totality and

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[151] "It must be part of heaven " by Josef Strauss, op.263.
[152] E-mail to the author, 23 Sep 03.

renders women invisible on stage. The actor's physical body is the ultimate reality on stage, not one reality among others more histrionically or sartorially produced.

The woman in the cage suggests that Ionescu departed from a notion of bourgeois identity as being unilaterally defined by traditionally patriarchal masculine norms, first of all to base identity on the affirmation of social power, on being dominant and a master. Interpreted from the marriage scene leading into the final waltz, the performance is mainly about overcoming this reduced masculine identity, and before doing so in the wedding scene, it exposes the pernicious one-sidedness in bourgeois masculinity through images of political and sexual subjection. This socio-psychic concept closed opportunities for the phenomenon of theatrical vibrancy, for only when ambiguous identities are envisaged on stage, theatrical vibrancy is a functional tool. Conceptually, the production reached this level of gender openness and gender theatricality merely in the marriage scene, and on a socio-political rather than a theatrical level.

Hence, we can state that a conception of masculinity and men as aggressive, lacking empathy and subtle emotionality undergirded the production until the final dance and that this conception did not allow for a complexity of character as implied in theatrical vibrancy, since the latter presupposes multi-dimensional, not reductive gender conceptions of theatrical figures. This critical focus on the relation between sexuality and social power in officially legitimated bourgeois masculinity had socio-political relevance (see 4.3.2), but it refused to endow the characters with a gender vibrancy that could have complicated the fixed bourgeois link between sex and specific gender qualities.

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[153] Schlegel's translation renders "human as she is" (V.2.67-68) as "*leibhaftig*", whose most literal translation would be "physically", or "in flesh and blood".

This restrictive conception seems to have been valid also for Rosalind-as-Ganymede, who potentially could have broken up the production's focus on masculinity alone. Both Konarek and Eggenhofer concur on the impression that Ganymede was played by Koch as a gay male, but not as a woman who pretends to be a male character. The seemingly open homosexual innuendos in Ganymede undermined theatrical vibrancy as a *poetic* effect. Koch produced an erotic attraction, as is insinuated by Gerd Vielhaber (*Bremer Nachrichten*, 29 July 1976), which ultimately left no doubts about his sex and sexuality: "*Sobald freilich Knut Koch als Rosalinde in die Hosenrolle des Jünglings einstieg, sich also gleichsam selbst 'enttarnte', verlor der homoerotische Effekt der Shakespeare-Komödie im Kleiderverwechslungsspiel der Liebenden seinen eigentlichen poetischen Reiz*."[154] Koch's performance seems to have become too real to be received as an artistic play.[155] The affirmation on the lack of poetic interest says more about the boundaries within which homoerotic effects are "charming" for Vielhaber (namely as textual poetics and ultimately heterosexual allusions) than about the charming or non-charming, ambiguous or non-ambiguous gender performance by Koch. For it is perfectly viable that gay members in the audience thought of Koch's Rosalind as charmingly feminine, though not representing a woman, even when dressed as Ganymede.[156]

As far as theatrical gender vibrancy in regard to the effect of all-male casting, the problem is not that Ganymede had gay innuendos (he hopefully has them on an all-

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[154] "As soon as Knut Koch as Rosalind gets into her cross-dressed role as a young man, i.e., 'uncovers' herself [in the German original the gender is neutral!] so to speak, the homoerotic effect implied in the lover's game with cross-dressing […] loses its poetic charm." The automatism described by the term "uncover" may reveal a lack of theatrical refinement in Koch's performance, but it seems more likely that it brings into relief to what extent the critic was bound in his perceptions by the notions of truth and falsity, instead of play and citation.

[155] I tried to contact Knut Koch through his editor, but received no answer from him. He currently lives in a tiny village in Brittany, France.

[156] Unfortunately, no pictures of Rosalind-as-Ganymede have survived (for a rehearsal picture, see appendix K, top). Appendix L shows Koch as Rosalind.

male stage), but that the impression of him being *completely* gay foregrounded the male body and masculinity as the only object of desire and discussion. If Clifford Williams' applied an all-male cast to discard the notions of sexuality and avoid a discussion on masculinity and femininity, Ionescu's production used it to discuss and dissect masculinity and male sexuality only.[157] Koch's gay Ganymede was in line with the production's assumptions on Shakespeare as psychotherapist (if only for men), but it did not create the mysterious complexity Shapiro expects to perceive on stage. One conclusion we can infer from this depoeticising effect is that the production showed itself dis-interested in formal complexity and subtlety, possibly to strengthen its politically provocative capacities. In the 1990s, Cheek by Jowl would be able to draw on notions of masculinity that did not exclude "feminine" gender characteristics,[158] whereas in the early 1970s, such a unisex approach does not go without saying. Hence, a provocative undermining of humanist assumptions on masculinity was a new and functional political strategy for a performance of *As You Like It* as a play about patriarchal structures and the kind of masculinity that upholds them. Yet, with hidnsight, Ionescu's strategy mirrors bourgeois' utopian assumptions that the ultimate basis of gender resides in the physical body and its sexuality. A phenomenon such as theatrical vibrancy blurs this basis and establishes not only a split between gender and sex, but also renders the actor's body obsolete as the *ultimate* horizon of gender interpretation, albeit visible as one element in such interpretation. Within Ionescu's production, Eggenhofer's attempt to take Celia seriously as a female character, to disappear as male actor for most of the time behind an impersonated female figure,

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[157] Eggenhofer, too, answered in the affirmative when asked whether the production was all about men and men's phantasies. And Konarek emphasised that, apart from Eggenhofer, no cross-cast actor attempted to perform a female character.
[158] On the construction of feminine gender characteristics as opposed to masculine in a bourgeois context, see 2.2.1.

remained an isolated project.[159] Gender blurring was not the ultimate goal in Ionescu's production, as can be seen in the aforementioned final wedding scene in which male actors' stripped off their clothes; in doing so, the actors left the world of characters within the dramatic narrative, and performed the final dance simply as men celebrating a dream of male community.

If the final dance can be read as a presentation of non-bourgeois gender conceptions as regards masculinity and male sexuality, it cannot be read so in respect to femininity. The female figures do not receive the redemptive expansion of their identity, as the male figures do. Even worse, women are finally rendered invisible on stage and in a way psychically obsolete. And if the final scene may present some kind of theatrical vibrancy by mixing masculine and feminine characteristics in the male figures, it is the dream of male universality come true: men who can relate to their sexual impulses beyond the structure of power play and integrate them as a kind of instinctive femininity. In doing so, men construct a playful, and what's more, self-sufficient community. No wonder that the gay community of the Ruhrgebiet flooded to the performances. Not surprisingly either, the bourgeois majority refused to accept this as a viable proposal for their heterosexual identity. They were too shocked by the physicality of the images, and too appalled by the insinuation of bourgeois masculinity as downright destructive, to accept the production as a symbolic discussion of bourgeois heterosexual identity.[160]

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[159] Asked about the intended effect of gender confusion, Eggenhofer said that he wanted to leave the decision to the audience. His concept was to play convincingly a female character and expose femininity as "constructed," so that the audience could perceive it in a different way than if a woman would perform the role, but not to blur gender attributes on stage. Yet, he did not want to construct a gender-ambiguous Celia on stage, but a convincingly female character, which would cause the audience to wonder how a man could do that. Gender vibrancy, if effected in this impersonation, was mostly unintentional.

[160] One can easily comprehend how a mixed cast would have allowed this production to sharpen the assumption that sexual liberation works as a fundament of political transformation. Furthermore, it would have even strenghtened the idea that the male world needs to integrate female energy, and it would have enforced the centrality of Rosalind as the female figure who (possibly) releases the animal Hymen from

When men are hooked on an experience of power, women (and other desired men as well) are turned into sexual objects. For Ionescu, neither male nor female figures could show a complex life of their own. The director refused to show a dominant masculinity that can justify this dominance by expressing what may be called paternal respect and caretaking, traditional bourgeois concepts to justify male hegemony (see 2.2.1). Instead, he focused on the inherent power structure and its psychic basis, according to which women had to perform the role of victims, men the role of lusty oppressors.[161] Again we may infer that Ionescu's theatrical intention was to expose the absurdity of bourgeois patriarchy, the deforming effect on women as victims and men as the oppressive upholders of such structure. This provocative exposure seems to me to have been the critical function of the grotesque acting style. Consequently, his theatrical strategy was to present caricatures on stage. The overall unrealistic, non-mimetic approach is also testified, among other elements, by the image of the forest of Arden as a huge tomato bed.[162] The court was meant to be represented by an old public bath-house which Hortmann quite rightly interpreted as a "vandalised slaughterhouse or a war-damaged factory, with burst pipes, torn-off tiles and heaps of rubble" (247). As mentioned above, Orlando could sometimes hardly speak but only stutter and mumble, because of his excessive erotic tension; and Audrey behaved like a half-torn puppet with clear non-human movements. In short, grotesquely sketched types instead of round

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her cage, renders possible her transformation into a productive, uniting god, and leads the couples into a new heaven. Rosalind would be a true master of ceremony, the figure that embodies sensuality and aggression, and a politically active, transforming character. We shall see in the interpretation of Cheek-by-Jowl's production that it is possible for an all-male show to produce such an empowered Rosalind that unites both feminine and masculine traits without harmonising them into a mythic androgyneity.

[161] Eggenhofer mentions a row he initially had with Ionescu over the conception of Celia, because Ionescu was not interested in subtle performances, but rather clichés, roughly sketched stereotypes, not complex human beings. What made matters worse for Eggenhofer, Ionescu originally wanted a girlish Celia, a female dummy. Finally, Ionescu gave in and Eggenhofer could go on with what he calls "a real female character taken seriously." But in a way, Eggenhofer's approach was too subtle for the production's intention to present psychic forces and social power positions, not individuals.

characters are presented on stage. They could not function as figures of identification, but as provocative mirrors in which audience members were supposed to see their own dark, pathetic sexual and emotional drama. Hortmann writes that Rosalind and Celia

> acted like tough infantrymen, as did most of the other characters. Their crude physical jokes […] and their barely checked desire to turn every confrontation into a dead-earnest brawl or occasion for murder only made sense if one assumed that the underlying idea of the production was of a group of hard-boiled soldiers, […] killing time by performing a comedy they could not understand any more, since women and love had been dead for a long time. […] Ionescu's rendering proclaimed the human and cultural losses and the destruction of values in the wake of ultimate war. (248)

I shall return to the cultural assumptions undergirding this production. For the moment suffice it to state that Ionescu's production did not want to reproduce any kind of bourgeois assumptions about comedy and love, nor comply with bourgeois notions of ideal manhood. Instead, it brought into the open destructive impulses whose presence was only repressed in the ordinary games of courtship and in the exertion of male authority. Ionescu's production denied these actors the possibility to produce convincingly a complex image of their characters. They were driven either by lust for power or lust for sexual gratification. The shepherds were satyrs, carrying around a cardboard phallus, "frightened earth creatures emerging briefly from their holes in the ground for hurried copulation and conversation" (Hortmann, 249). If Clifford Williams could still believe in lovers as human beings endowed with a resonant soul, Ionescu's production treats this utopian subjectivity with utter disrespect.[163] It is not about sublimation but about sexual liberation, or as Otto Falckenberg noticed as early as 1912 in respect of *As You Like It*: "Liberated Eros changes into Pan."[164]

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[162] Konarek, interview with the author, 12 May 04. Hortmann describes the forest as "reduced to a few sickly plants under plastic covers, watered hopefully but without success by the shepherds" (*German Stage*, 249).

[163] According to Konarek, the only character who revealed touches of a "soul" was Knut Koch's Rosalind, who had some tender moments with Celia and Orlando.

[164] See Hortmann, *German Stage*, German Edition, 9.

With the possible exception of Celia and Rosalind, the cross-cast male characters on stage hardly found any individuality in the female roles. And they share this lack with the male characters. This became especially clear in the minor roles, such as Audrey, who, as has been said, moved around like a broken puppet, readily and clumsily lying down and opening her legs for Touchstone, who was reduced to his horny interest in sex in general and Audrey in specific (see Konarek). Since this grotesque acting repeated socially informed power positions, i.e., male dominance and female submission, it clearly functioned as a means to expose how human identity and behaviour can get permeated by social power play to such an extent that it merely imitates these social power positions in their sexual play. Without individuality, these figures had no liberty to act out what Dollimore calls “transgressive reinscriptions.” The grotesque acting style flatly renounced all humanist assumptions on *character* and *person*, their possibility for agency and choice, so that characters merely reproduced socially produced power positions.

Interestingly enough, both Williams’ and Ionescu’s productions make clear, through quite opposite objectives and strategies, the ambivalent essence of theatrical vibrancy, for neither is interested in acknowledging inner contradiction as a fundamental element of human existence, and neither intents to produce a stage body that thwarts the spectators’ need or desire to come to clear conclusions about gender, sex, and sexuality. In fact, both try to suppress this vibration through a specific form of unilateral reading, either in the direction of transcendental purity or a supressed and finally liberated male sexuality.

4.1.3. Theatricalising Hybridity: Declan Donnellan and the Functions of Subverted Stereotypes

Cheek by Jowl's version of *As You Like It*, which opened in 1991 at the Redgrave Theater in Farnham, was designed from the outset as a touring production. Due to the show's enormous success, the tour took the company all around the globe. It generated enthusiasm from Buenos Aires to Bombay, from São Paulo to Saint Petersburg.[165] Later, the production was revived and toured Europe and the US, from September 1994 until January 1995, when it arrived for the first time in the London West End for its final three-week run. For the 1994/95 touring season the production was partially recast. Orlando and Celia were played by new actors, whereas the actors playing Rosalind and Touchstone, among others, remained the same.

Despite these changes, the production preserved a stable formal language in its austere, multifunctional set design on an almost bare stage and in the clear and well organised stage business. The relative stability seems to be the case also for the acting of the performers in different theatrical spaces.[166] Nevertheless, a change in the cast clearly affects the colour and energy a character radiates. Simon Coates's Celia, for example, was received as being more camp than Tom Hollaender's [sic].[167] On the whole, however, and judging by the reviews, a stable exterior form characterised this touring production.

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[165] The *Jornal da Tarde* is quoted in the British press. For the Brazilian critic, the performance caused the impression "[a]s if the dazzling poetry of Shakespeare were being inventend on the spot" (quoted in: *Gay Times* February 1995, No. 5, no page available).

[166] Adrian Lester, in an unpublished letter to Joy Leslie Gibson, confirms this relative stability also for his acting. "The changes are fairly technical really, mainly out of consideration for the distance of the audience, visibility, clarity of diction, volume, etc."

[167] Most decidedly in Solomon, 183, note 2: "In the production that played in Stonybrook, New York in 1991, the actor playing Celia was a bit squat, wonderfully intense, and quite serious in her/his doting on Rosalind. But in the version that played in Brooklyn, in 1994, Celia was played by a taller, lither actor who played 'girlishness' with more laugh-grabbing self-consciousness-almost campily."

On the other hand, a conscious fluidity is an integral part of the theatrical aesthetics of Cheek by Jowl's productions. In an interview with Paul Heritage (30 May 1995), Donnellan remarks about his own working style that "we normally find that we didn't really know what the play was about until after the last performance, which is very regrettable. There are all sorts of revelations we're having now about *As You Like It* (a year after the last performance), which isn't terribly useful, is it? But there you go, all these things are work in process and they're part of your life" (Delgado, 83). If Clifford Williams' production foreclosed meaningful readings other than those in line with "spiritual purity," and Ionescu made it consciously difficult to advance humanist and spiritual readings of the playtext within the parameters of his directorial choices, Cheek by Jowl's version of *As You Like It* is characterised by a formal stability that looks for interpretative and emotional openness. This search certainly has to do with the company's roots in fringe theatre and alternative lifestyles. Asked by Ralph Berry about his company's ideals, Donnellan declares himself free of the weight of tradition. For him

> theatre is entertaining people on a profound level. That's basically what's behind Cheek by Jowl. In order to entertain people, we use classical texts but I don't acknowledge any commitment to the tradition of Shakespearean production. My only commitment is to entertain the audience in the best way possible. And I can be the only judge; it has come back to my responsibility. (*On Directing*, 190)

Since Donnellan constructs a parallel between his productions and his life as unstable and developing structures, and as such both as works in process, he is more interested in making palpable the energy that propels the dynamics of life than putting on stage clear positions on gender and love, be they spiritualised or instinctual. In the same interview with Ralph Berry, Donnellan responds in the affirmative to Berry's question if he sees "the function of theatre as some kind of social therapy for the audience" (*On Directing*, 206), but Donnellan does locate this therapeutic social service

in theatre's capacities to entertain the audience in such a way that it imaginatively expands the spectators' sensibilities into hitherto unaccepted emotional possibilities: "I like to think that the only way that theatre makes people better, the only social service it does, is to make people bigger. It expands their imaginations, even if that means showing people what it's like to kill babies" (206). Donnellan's theatrical aesthetics is concerned with mapping out a space for this imaginative process to manifest. The process itself remains relatively spontaneous. In this interplay between a fairly neutral but fixed visual language and a wide variety of spontaneous emotional reactions in actors and audience, we find a duality and tension that seem characteristic of Cheek by Jowl's work.

It is interesting and consistent, then, that despite this flirt with spontaneity and dynamic unstability within the artistic process, Cheek by Jowl's approach to theatrical works of art is not as fluid and unfixed as it may seem at first sight. For Donnellan and his partner Nick Ormerod (Cheek by Jowl's other artistic director and the company's stage designer) are well aware of all kinds of contexts, not the least the socio-cultural context, as frames in which works of art exist and construct their changing and complex meanings. The frame represents for them a kind of pressure under which works of art can reveal an inner, complex dynamics that exceeds the presuppositions of the given frame itself. "A work of art is something with a frame around it – sometimes, something that we think we know all about, something familiar. What the frame does is to draw our attention to the ambiguities within the frame" (Interview with Lyn Gardner, *The Guardian*, 22 May 2002). If one of the functions of a work of art is to de-familiarise frames and expose their inner world as one filled with ambiguities, it ideally achieves this goal by making spectators aware of this frame, subverting their intellectual and sensual complacency by alienating them from the very own aesthetic and moral values

in which their lives and perception are embedded and which they have taken for granted. Donnellan shows himself deeply convinced that the *raison d'etre* in a work of art is exactly to challenge the streamlining function and pressure of these frames. To do so equals to undermine the determination of fixed identities. In his book *The Actor and the Target*, he contends on the narcissist function of everyday frames: "The identity has no intentions of letting mere reality contradict its theories. When we see the world we create it; we never see what really is. Every time we open our eyes we have made a work of art. That is as near the truth as we get" (242).

However, different from everyday works of art, the aesthetic work of art at its best manages to lay open this process of fabrication, letting the interplay of theatricality and reality confound the theories of identity. In *The Actor and the Target*, Donnellan specifies the meaning of entertainment "on a profound level", as he termed his theatrical objectives in the interview with Ralph Berry mentioned above. If everyday imagination presents a kind of sentimental anaesthetics that covers painful, ambivalent reality by "fixing the flux and ambivalence of life in the certainty of stillness" (107), then works of art can make us "see, however briefly, a more real world, where joy and pain are felt for what they are" (238). Donnellan's productions in general aspire to subvert such everyday fabrication of identity and expose its fixed character as what it essentially is, namely a fantasy.[168] In the wake of this more real, less censored and controlled world, essential notions of character and personality get dissolved. "When we try to capture the essence of someone we are being sentimental. Sentimentality is the refusal to accept ambivalence. Certainty is sentimental. We are sentimental not only when we say someone is nice. We are being equally sentimental to say someone is nasty. To say that

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[168] "Only a fantasy is controllable" (211). Compare this statement and the treatment of identity throughout his book as a concept based on what someone does, not what s/he is, with Butler's concept of

a race is good or that a people is bad is also sentimental. […] Sentimentality is terrifying" (107). Donnellan's non-sentimental theatre rests on the insight that given the impossibility to play who a character is one can nevertheless play a character reacting to a situation in a specific way.

> Pronouncing a character to be either good or evil will block the actor. Only what we do can be good or evil. A character can be neither in essence. […] We can never know, control or contain the essence of anyone, including ourselves. We can however, observe what we are doing. Analysing the nature of matter, the physicist ends up describing less what the particle is, and more how the particle behaves. (107-8)

And these deeds can make palpable and visible the various forces that work upon the theatrical figure on stage when doing what s/he does. In playing what a character does within a specific situation, the actor creates a stage persona that suggests all kinds of motives and possibilities in the character but one, namely that s/he creates her/himself as an autonomous act.[169] In other words, Donnellan constructs his non-illusionist, but admittedly suggestive theatricality as an artistic frame within which actor and stage business are used to theatricalise and hence de-naturalise received cultural values and expectations on mimesis and to undermine unified notions of identity and character. To read Donnellan in a consistent way means to understand that, whenever he refers to the actor's imagination and its conjunction with the audience's imagination, what he bases his argument on about the mind expanding qualities of theatrical entertainment is such

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performative identity. The proximity between Donellan's presuppositions, presented as based more on experience than philosophical or linguistic analysis, and Butler's theoretical work is striking.

[169] Not surprisingly, Peter Brook showed himself enthusiastic about Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It* and praised especially its suggestive qualities (see Edwardes, no page available). Donnellan, however, is less esoteric and more political in his theatrical suggestion and choices, when he finally pairs, to give an example, Jaques with Amiens and brings the gay couple back into the dancing marriage ritual. As we shall see, Donnellan's knack for ambivalence and fluidity in *As You Like It* is always infused with socio-political awareness.

non-sentimental, non-essential, and dynamic understanding of the imaginative faculties.[170]

Significantly, the production's most obvious intervention into the received interpretation of the Shakespearean text opens a kind of programmatic prelude to the action. The much commented on opening scene can stand as emblematic for the theatrical frame of the production. All actors dressed alike in white shirt and black trousers enter the stage, walk around in a circle while the actor later to play Jaques recites the first two lines of his famous soliloquy: "All the world's a stage/ And men and women merely players" (II.7.139-140). At the mentioning of "men" and "women", the male actors form two groups, one being the male characters, the other the two female ones, Rosalind and Celia. When Jaques speaks the next line "They have their exits", the actor to perform Adam puts on a butler's hat and jacket, and with "and their entrances" Orlando steps forward. During their conversation the other actors remain on stage, but the strict male-female distinction is dissolved. Orlando's forearms are spread with a brown substance indicating his situation as a working man, in stark contrast of the bare, non-naturalist stage, and the rest of his appearance. A few minutes later, the audience will see Oliver putting on the jacket among the other actors and approach Orlando.[171]

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[170] See also Delgado (81) with a, from my point of view, too naturalising intention (my italics): "All the work, from Sophocles to the American musical, is characterised by the same desire to build a framework that will release the actor to re-invent the play *spontaneously* each time, to find rules that will set the actor free." I believe this spontaneity to be the fruit of thorough analysis and hard work, for it is the fruit of the framework and its rules, i.e., an analysis of the play's and the actors' contexts, that allows for such intensity. And Donnellan remains aware that the crucial point is not only to set the actors free, but to offer them a target, an objective for their freedom that enhances the complexity of their characters and the play, so that their freedom from preset rules allows to highlight and challenge the rules that shoot through the playtext and the tradition of theatrical performance.

[171] Descriptions of the production's stage business stem mainly from a video taken on 11 Feb 1995 at the Albery Theatre on occasion of a matinee performance, a video which I had the opportunity to view at the Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum in London.

This scene exposes the strong metatheatrical element in the production. The style of representation is decidedly a non-illusionist mimesis. Theatrical signs are used rather in an indexical than iconic way[172], which means that elements usually associated with mimetic realism such as the mud-covered arms of Orlando in I.1 receive an open theatricalisation. This theatricality when extended to masculinity and femininity stages this category as a surface sign. It is not impersonated, but indicated, as in the separation of male and female characters while the actors share a uniform look.[173] Later on, traditional gender markers such as a pearl necklace, ear rings, a ribbon in the hair and some make-up are used to transform the actor's stage presence into signifying "woman" without hiding that the actor underneath is a man. This non-illusionist treatment of gender and identity as such is facilitated and fostered by Nick Ormerod's bare stage as a box in which green stripes of cloth indicate the trees in the forest of Arden, whereas a focused light design characterises the various situations at court and in the forest.

If the theatricality of the production clearly undermines from the beginning any concept of identity as the expression of essentialist characteristics, it also avoids the impression that non-essentialist identity could then be understood as constructed out of individual choices alone. Donnellan uses scene I.1 and its non-illusionist theatrical frame to draw attention to the fact that someone/something defines the script of the performance. An instance or norm regulates the characters' entrances and exits. By focusing on indexical signs to identify the characters on stage, the production sets out to produce them first as types, or in other words, it self-consciously employs stereotypes to

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[172] For a discussion of Peirce's semiotic typology of "symbolic", "indexical", "iconic" signs within performance analyses, see Elam. He alerts to the fact that "on stage the symbolic, iconic and indexical sign-function are co-present: all icons and indices in the theatre necessarily have a conventional basis" (27), which makes cultural contextualisation a necessary practice in performance analysis.

[173] In general, this indexical focus strengthened the function of language as a tool to inspire imagination. The journey to the forest of Arden is an excellent piece of stage business to exemplify this instigating effect. The combination of dialogue and walking round and round on the bare stage was enough to

attribute a temporary identity onto them. Such theatricalisation of identity reveals the latter as the fulfillment of social conventions. But given the indexical aspect of these identity markers, the life and behaviour of the character clearly exceeds her/his identity. In other words, the non-mimetic style of theatrical frame undermines the validity of the social frame, which under the influence of bourgeois and late bourgeois notions of identity tends to take identity as an essential, pregiven category or an individually chosen attribute.

In this vein, Adrian Lester and Simon Coates first expose femaleness as nothing more than a question of successfully fulfilling stereotyped expectations on clothing, accessories and body movement. Long dresses, jewellery, girlish giggles are enough to evoke the image of two young women barely out of their adolescence. Whereas Lester's male body never disappears completely behind the female stage figure of Rosalind, Coates successfully hides for some moments his male body and gives a perfect impersonation of a woman. Whereas Lester was never accused of being campy, Coates' performance called up such associations, without really, i.e. continously, embracing that style. Instead of affirming or defending camp as a male aesthetics in regard to "feminine" qualities, the production maintained these questions of style on the surface of the character's identity and pointed at a complex emotional reality which lurked through these stylised forms of self-presentation and exceeded the level of identity, whether it could be called feminine, masculine, or camp (for a visual impression of this interaction between sartorial surface and emotional depth, see appendices N, O, and P).

Therefore, as the performance moved on, it became increasingly clear that the focus of attention lay on a serious theatrical make-belief that did not hide its theatricality. Neither Lester nor Simon Coates performing Celia displayed any sign of

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convince the spectator that now the action moved from court to forest. No iconic visual signs were

metatheatrical irony when Touchstone takes them on to "stroke your chins, and swear by your beards that I am a knave" (I.ii.67-8). Of course, the irony is there through the casting itself, and any ostentatious reaction to it would run the danger of turning the performance into a drag show. Schuch believes that the fear of cheap and potentially misogynistic stereotyping possibly made the actors go for elements of psychological realism (104). I would rather say that in doing so within a clearly non-mimetic, anti-illusionist frame, the production could present a concept of identity in which social conventions such as gender could be brought in tension with human emotions common to both sexes. The reason for this possibility lies in the non-mimetic frame which assures that the characters, even when constructed through signs in the tradition of psychological realism, remain highly theatricalised figures, despite their openly conventionalised behaviour. This non-illusionist frame turns mimetic elements like clothing and gestures into forms of mimicry, whereas the psychological realism works against a simple ironisation of conventions. Through this double-strategy combining mimicry and realism the production manages to remain critical of the limiting effect of social conventions, while taking seriously the emotional depth of the characters.

Where drag shows expose emotions as stereotyped reactions and ridicule them as such, Cheek by Jowl's psychological theatricalisation constructs an inner world of emotions that exceeds social conventions and stereotypes. Throughout the production, this theatrical world will remain in tension with the socially accepted channels of gender expression, although in her/his desire the character depends on these channels to get what s/he wants. The special quality of Cheek by Jowl's production is to render these two levels of identity and the respective dialectical relation a central feature of its all-male aesthetics.

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necessary to catch attention and achieve a suspension of disbelief.

The tension between gender as an exterior sign and a psychological interiority can also be detected in Lester's comparison of his performance of femininity with the acquisition of a foreign language. "It's like speaking French. You know you want to say something, so you think it in English and then speak it in French. Through Sue Lefton's movement we've been able to think about it in a detailed way as a woman" (qtd. in Reade, 95). The imitation of an exterior sign like body movement allows a feeling for the interior universe ("think about it as a woman") of a woman. In his intention to present a "real" woman, not an over-the-top drag queen, Lester resorted to conventionalised female behaviour and reproduced a Rosalind more traditionally "feminine" in her expressions than usual. In her defence against Duke Frederick, her voice starts to tremble, she bursts into tears and is outright devastated by her banishment. Later in the forest, Lester's Rosalind-as-Ganymede reveals signs of an emotional tension and moodiness whenever s/he meets Orlando that worked to foreground the female stage presence behind Ganymede, since this moodiness establishes clear parallels between Ganymede and the Rosalind at the court of Duke Frederick. Rosalind-as-Ganymede had trouble to produce a male body language: ostentatiously struggling to take on a courageous attitude when meeting strangers such as Corin, and furtively showing herself disappointed that Orlando agreed to being cured of his love for Rosalind. Critics in general concurred on Lester's performance as producing a feminising effect for Rosalind's stage presence.[174] This effect was often received as levelling out differences between the stage presences of a female and a male Rosalind and even led Kirsty Milne to judge that Donnellan's "production gains

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[174] The critic in the *Observer* wrote: "Rosalind is one of the most forthright women in Shakespeare, but Lester doesn't preserve this quality. He makes her bashful, tittering" (24 Jan 95). Equally John Mullan in the *Times Literary Supplement* (10 Feb 95) perceived Lester's Rosalind as "girlish" and Michael Billington can not hide a touch of disappointment when he opines: "Actresses playing Rosalind tend to

surprisingly little from having Rosalind and Celia played by men. […].” This may well have been so for spectators who wished to see a self-assertive Rosalind on stage, one who in the forest of Arden gains control over her destiny and emotionality and therefore can serve as a proxy for liberal women's wishes actively to conquer the patriarchal gender and power regime.[175] Such expectations, however, miss the intentions of the non-illusionist frame around the elements of psychological realism, which is to avoid that the stage figure be reduced in a specific moment to one layer of identity. If Ganymede shines through a fragile and nervous Rosalind, if Rosalind does not hide the male actor's body, the audience becomes aware of "character" in this production as the effect of a gendered double-play, in which a theatrical figure is simultaneously to be taken as the effect of the character's and the actor's presence, drawing on both social conventions and individualised emotions.

The effect on me was rather illuminating, stimulating the imagination, than mysterious, as Shapiro contends in his discussion of theatrical vibrancy. For, as already suggested, what the acknowledgment of gender stereotypes – as obviously, theatrically produced patterns of behaviour – reveals in the case of Cheek by Jowl's Rosalind and Celia are characters who express themselves through these stereotypes and simultaneously struggle against them. The cross-casting suggests a human being on stage whose emotional range extends beyond the stereotyped behaviour of femininity (or masculinity, if cross-dressed as Ganymede). The audience becomes invited to imagine the stage figures as gendered characters, and as such they behave conforming to

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highlight the character's boyishness; Adrian Lester, as a man, seems unashamed of exploring her femininity" (*Guardian*, 21 Jan 95).

[175] Milne's short comment that "[i]n Rosalind's case, you realise the positive advantages of having the part played by a woman" seems to imply such a search for Rosalind as a positive role-model for liberal feminism.

social rules, and as dynamic human beings, for whose emotionality the social constraints of a gender based behaviour are external and limiting regulations.

This contradictory dimension erupts in those moments when the male actor's body and the stage figure's gender openly contradict each other. Therefore, the femininity of Lester's Rosalind may best not be read as the essential femininity of a "real" woman, harmonising non-theatrical gender role with theatrical gender representations, as done by critics who complain about this Rosalind's fragility, but as the expression of a learned social behaviour. Lester's Rosalind comes across as someone clearly at pains with her received femininity, but also when cross-dressed as Ganymede distanced from embodying masculinity. Lester's performance as a Ganymede who struggles overtly against his feminine habits reveals masculinity equally as a matter of fulfilling exterior signs. When Ganymede meets Corin in II.4, he first clears his throat to lower his voice, but when Corin mockingly looks at his tightly held legs, he move to adopt a more open-legged position. In his performance as Ganymede, Lester employed other signs such as patting Orlando's back, smacking his hands on his upper legs, and standing akimbo. Schuch points out that these conventional signals gain an ironising effect in Lester's cross-cast and cross-dressed performance (105). If with a female actor performing Rosalind-as-Ganymede these signs tend to gain a kind of authenticity, since they are employed to foster the male appearance of the female actress, with a male artist they gain a metatheatrical quality that exposes masculine behaviour as mere role playing, the fulfilment of a performance of masculinity. As far as the central role of Rosalind is concerned, Donnellan's indexical use of gender signs deauthenticises them, distances both femininity and masculinity from any kind of "true" basis behind the performance. Gender becomes exposed as an artificial marker to describe what this character "is" by showing how s/he does certain things. In a more

technical language, this performance exposes any identity as the ephemeral effect of performative acts and exterior signs. In doing so, it achieves a deeper understanding on the human predicament that we all live in and struggle against received patterns of behaviour. The range of feelings and dreams is always wider than any identity can encompass.

Focus on these acts and signs endows the production with its special theatrical quality as well as its subversive potential as regards gender identity. The theatrical as well as political possibilities of gender as a question of employing exterior signs such as, for instance, sartorial items become clear in IV.1, in which Lester's Ganymede plays with an apron as to characterise different gender identities that mark and simultaneously contradict the gendered acts of the characters. It allows the two main characters, Rosalind and Orlando, to assume hybrid gender identities without becoming androgynous creatures. In this scene, which leads to the mock wedding, Lester's Ganymede puts on the apron taken from Aliena and makes some seductive movements with hips and eyes to catch Orlando's attention. Rosalind-as-Ganymede leaves this conventional performance of femininity when in IV.1.69ff, s/he takes off the apron and makes Orlando hold it in front of him throughout the dialogue in which she teaches him about the fickleness of women – a moment in the dialogue in which s/he challenges Orlando to be more active and seductive. Finally, Ganymede puts the apron on as a head scarf for the mock wedding. The whole scene shows how hybridity is rooted in adopting subsequently changing gendered activities, instead of blending gender attributes into a new personality or trying to avoid them by purportedly transcending them, as in Williams' production. This scene is also a wonderful exemplification of Donnellan's credo that an actor should not try to show who a character is, but allow the audience to infer such impression by showing them what he does.

In its hybridity, this cross-gender construction of Rosalind/Rosalind-as-Ganymede/Ganymede-imagined-as-Rosalind, or of Orlando as wooer and wooed, exposes how fixed gender expectations and stereotypes constrain (but also enable) the variety and diversity of self-expression in this fictive theatrical figure. The girlish Rosalind is as painful a role for this human theatrical figure as is the boyish Ganymede. What comes through this hybrid unstable stage figure is a human being not at ease with either her feminine or his masculine role playing. Given the dynamics of the character's inner life, any identity is a restrictive lie. This is a fact brought into relief by the cross-cast convention and strenghtened by the cross-dressing of Rosalind, but also by Orlando's willingness to engage in the make-belief of wooing a fictitious Rosalind. If any identity is a lie, but also an unavoidable one, since human beings must assume shape and act from a certain subject position, the only way to avoid the trap of falling into that lie is to perform it as a game of make-believe – on and off stage. The theatricality of these gender identities allows a) to acknowledge that they exist in relation to social expectations and exercise a formative influence on the characters' self-presentation, and b) to displace the regulations of these performances by countering them with theatrical behaviour that distances the character from the purported fixity of social conventions.

This theatrical exposure and subsequent subversion of gender as nothing but a stereotype implies that the character development in Rosalind and Orlando usually associated with the experience in Arden gains a less moral but more performative quality. For if the first step is to acknowledge that it is the stereotype that acts on the character and takes a hold on her/his actions and self-interpretations, and indirectly on the spectators in their real lives, the second subversive step is to show that the character can use the stereotype for other, more liberating performances than those that merely

fulfil the statement. In this sense, this Cheek by Jowl's performance enacts on stage what Butler calls the possibilities and pleasures of citational variation. Neither Orlando nor Rosalind leave the patriarchal binary order, but it becomes clear that in their relationship, by swapping gender roles, they make this binary structure develop a dynamics that expels fixed gendered identities and allows them relative freedom of self-expression. The subversion of gender stereotypes provides an experience of gender provisionality[176] that perhaps does not grant the subject independence from patriarchal society, but surely allows it a relative freedom within this society.

4.1.4. Burlesque Diversity: Katharina Thalbach and the Functions of Non-psychological Play

The majority of critics detected in Katharina Thalbach's 1993 production of *As You Like It* at the Schiller Theater Berlin a lack of interest in psychological characterisation. Although some deplored this as a loss, most perceived in this non-psychological approach a burlesque aesthetics concerning plot and characters as the main aesthetic quality of the production. The show's dramaturg Franziska Koetz confirms the importance of this approach and its roots in what might be called the tradition of popular theatre:[177]

> The production was clearly influenced by the traditions of popular theatre, a kind of rough style. It was a special kick for all participants to reanimate this kind of theatre on that stage, because it is an almost forgotten tradition on the German state subsidised theatre.

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[176] See Solomon's reaction: "Most of the polymorphous possibilities are lost in contemporary productions where a woman plays Rosalind. […] At the Cheek by Jowl production, on the other hand, I experienced the epilogue with a heightened, almost giddy, awareness of gender's provisionality" (26).

[177] Interview with the author, 11.02.04. The interview was carried out in German. The importance of popular Italian theatre was also signalled by the back cover of the programme (see appendix R).

Hence, the approach towards characters' identity on stage was not to produce psychological complexity but a theatrical intensity that entailed a certain comic, even shocking, emotional roughness. Thalbach's production did not go to such length as presenting characters as social types, as for example in *commedia dell'arte*.[178] But it cared less about psychological differentiation, and more about maintaining a theatrical awareness of the artistic nature of acting, stage business, and the theatrical narrative as such. The all-male casting was received as having the effect to dissolve mimetic identities (see most prominently Hartmann), an effect underlined by consequent doubling of all roles apart from Rosalind, Orlando, and Celia. The courtiers at the court and in the forest were played by the same actors, so that the reality on stage became a theatrical world turned onto itself. Koetz recalled that actors directly addressed the audience more than once. It seems fair to say that in doing so, the production tried to enhance the metatheatrical awareness and turn the audience into an accomplice of its non-realist theatrical pleasures. Or in other words, the all-male performance not only dissolved the boundaries of gendered identities, but through the doubling of characters also the boundaries between civilised court and the court in nature, between the social and magic reality in the play's narrative. Moreover, the doubling worked as to establish the performance as an artistic world in its own right, which did not pretend to imitate any outside social reality. According to Koetz, what interested Thalbach in this aesthetics was to find out what emotional possibilities, especially in its darker aspects, "could be transported through such a burlesque theatre. The burlesque treats emotions in a special way, and [the production] wanted to follow this track."

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[178] Schaper perceived these roots as a redemptive progress in the Shakespearean tradition, since it liberated Shakespeare from the "tradition of heavy German Romanticism". See also the back cover of the programme (appendix R).

A couple of theatrical elements can get identified that helped the director to establish a consistent context for the burlesque presentation of stage business and characters' identities in this production. One important element in this aesthetics was played by Thomas Brasch's translation, which was less interested in rendering the literal meaning of the Shakespearean playtext into German than in conveying the multiplicity of discoursive points of view and subject positions to the actors and the audience.[179] Koetz stated that Brasch often cut down the subtext or ambiguities from the dialogue in favour of a quick exchange of meaning. Thus he produced a certain giddiness through quickly jumping from one discursive standpoint to the other, and not through complexity of meaning in single statements.[180] Although he maintained the erotic flavour of the English text, he was not very interested in the innuendos on cross-dressing.[181] Since its register is an everyday German, with some conscious changes in common syntax, the translation adapts the rhythm of the blank verse to a more popular context.[182] The translated text not only worked very well, according to Koetz, for the

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[179] Koetz recalls that Thalbach insisted on her companion Thomas Brasch as the translator of the playtext. Both had previously worked together on *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and knew each other and their intentions well enough to establish a complicit partnership.

[180] All critics understood the importance of the translation for the burlesque atmosphere of the production, though not all approved of this treatment of Shakespeare's language. Exemplary in its argumentation against Brasch's translation are the words by critic Robin Detje of the important weekly *Die Zeit*, which intellectually "caters" for well-educated middle-class people: "*Die Lachwut regiert, mit ihrer Schwester der Flachwut. Es ist vor lauter Spaß, als habe Shakespeare nie ein doppeldeutiges oder gar tiefsinniges Wort geschrieben.*" [An obsession to laughing reigns, together with its sister, the obsession to flattening out. In this midst of laughter, it seems as if Shakespeare had never written an ambiguous, not to speak of profound, word.] If we compare Detje's middle-class defence of a "thoughtful" Shakespeare to Schaper's relief in face of a burlesque one, we can perceive this production as a site of cultural battles. Schaper's critique was published in *Zitty*, Berlin's most popular magazine to cover culture and politics for a young, slightly leftish readership – similar to *Time Out* in London.

[181] He did not translate, for example, Touchstone's allusion to Rosalind's and Celia's beards and swearing (I.2.67), nor Touchstone's pun on Orlando's encounter with a man before he can encounter his Rosalind (III.2.99-110). In an interview with Martin Linzer, Brasch affirmed that he worked on the translation without thinking of Thalbach's all-male concept for the production. He was more interested in producing the overall effect of an impure world than of a specific gender confusion (*Theater der Zeit* 28).

[182] Klaus Ulsmann's impression can stand for the general gist of attitudes towards Brasch's translation and its importance for the production's overall ambiguity. Many critics shared Ulsmann's description of the tension in the production, though not always to such negative evaluation. "*Da die alle Andeutung in polternde Behauptungen umwandelnde Bearbeitung Braschs mit sprachlicher Spitzfindigkeit und Blankversschinderei aber gerade die[...] intellektuelle Annäherung an das immer doppelbödige,*

actors themselves, but produced an equally sharp-edged and giddy atmosphere as far as the characters' interaction was concerned. What distinguishes this burlesque giddiness structurally from the complexity in theatrical vibrancy as described by Shapiro is the burlesque's focus on an ephemeral, always ironic *surface* reality. Theatrical vibrancy establishes a difficulty to decide what is the ultimate horizon for reality and truth, but incites the audience to solve this riddle, whereas Brasch's and Thalbach's burlesque vibrancy skips this question beforehand, in order to establish a self-contained, bottomless world of swirling signifiers.

Costumes and scenery also contributed to such burlesque atmosphere of the production, in which nothing needs to be taken seriously. Charles revealed a strapped-on card-board penis in the wrestling scene, Touchstone was dressed in an oversized baby-overall and Aliena was carrying a children's bucket through the forest of Arden (see appendix U). When Orlando pinned his sonnets onto wooden poles that signified a rather ascetic, wintery Arden, he sung one of the most famous German *Lieder*, namely Wilhelm Müller's *Der Lindenbaum*, whose first lines are almost the hallmark of trite German Romantic desire for homely satisfaction.[183] The song made an ironic comment on Orlando's apparently genuine passion, if judged merely by his acting. To a similar effect, both "princesses" had to enter the court of Arden through two rather narrow

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sinnbetörende und –betäubende Spiel vorgibt, bleibt die Aufführung irgendwo zwischen Kopf und Bauch stecken, wird sie immer wieder, ganz plötzlich nach so viel Spannung und Rausch harmlos und beliebig." ["Since this adaptation by Brasch transforms verbal hints into ranting affirmations and equally pretends in its verbal hair-splitting and strenuous use of the blank-verse to bring intellectuality in contact with the always ambiguous, simultaneously intoxicating and anaestheticizing play of the actors, the production remains stuck somewhere between mind and emotions, becomes again and again suddenly harmless and arbitrary after so much tension and intoxication."

[183] The poem is much better known by its first line *Am Brunnen vor dem Tore*. It became famous in a tune that is a little bit simpler than the melody composed by Franz Schubert for his cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, a cycle whose Lieder deal with the unhappy love of a miller for his beloved. Guntbert Warns sang only the first two stanzas, those before the poem turns into an expression of Romantic desire for death. The stanzas are "*Am Brunnen vor dem Tore/Da steht ein Lindenbaum;/Ich träumt in seinem Schatten/So manchen süßen Traum./Ich schnitt in seine Rinde/So manches liebe Wort;/Es zog in Freud und Leide/Zu ihm mich immer fort.*" [By the well before the gate/ there stands a linden tree; /I dreamed in its shadow/ some sweet dreams./ I carved in its bark/ some words of love;/ in joy and sorrow/ I was ever drawn to it.]

hatches on the stage floor, which produced a comic effect when contrasted with their Renaissance costumes.[184] Other effects that highlighted an element of incongruency and thus produced comic moments was achieved by elements of scenery, such as artificial flowers that suddenly appeared on the stage floor throughout the scenes in Arden, a bear who appears on stage and is driven back into its cage by vicar Sir Oliver Martext's prayers, as well as the sounds of birds and sheep. The otherwise scarce stage in which the forest is merely indicated by poles hanging down from the ceiling (see appendices U and W) made sufficiently clear that the elements of naturalist staging, and the concomitant emotional states that are usually associated with them, are cited only to poke fun on this kind of emotionality. Another instance would be the use of lighting which is employed, on the one hand, to produce a poetic effect, and on the other to characterise in a funny way the situation of Duke Senior's party, when all men gather in the isolated, focused spotlight as if there they could feel the warmth of rare sunrays in Arden. Thus, translation, stage business, scenery, and lighting created a tension between burlesque and poetic and, to a lesser degree, realist atmosphere, in which realist signs often served as a means to foreground the burlesque and poetic elements. Together they produced a clash in styles, which had vibrant side effects. If the burlesque brought into play a rather coarse theatrical style, the poetic impact of the stage succeeded for some critics in counter-balancing it, producing indeed a kind of aesthetic vibrancy in style. But even if set design and lighting managed to cite a romantic poetic quality not only as a feature of the play but also of human longing,[185] the burlesque stage business and acting styles backgrounded these more reflective elements of the production,

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[184] Let us recall Petrica Ionescu's production, which used the same contrast for a provocative political attack against received bourgeois aesthetics. Thalbach plays with this aesthetics in order to make fun of it, but without rendering it invalid. See also 4.3.4.
[185] For in what else but this congruence could a notion of *artistic* success consist?

establishing a dynamics that exploits the human longing for a free play of surface signifiers.

As far as characters are concerned, this variety in style allowed to hint at a theatrical complexity and ambiguity that seemed to have created a psychologically convincing figure, as we shall see in a moment, in the case of Michael Maerten's Rosalind, but often had difficulties to convey this variety as anything more than "fireworks" of surface ideas. Some critics complained that this game with surprising and comic appearances hardly brought into relief the emotional restraints in the characters and the political regulations in their social context.[186]

In this context, Koetz expressed a reservation by stating that although the acting style as regards the interaction of the couples was widely burlesque, some elements of stage business were meant to convey the darker background of this play as well as the possibly painful effect of it on some characters, especially Orlando and Celia. The scenery of act 1 at the court, for example, was deliberately void of props. The bare and narrow stage only allowed acting *en face* or *en profile* and little interaction between the characters, which should make clear the repressive atmosphere behind the verbal fireworks.[187] Similarily, in Arden, Celia was placed outside the square formed by the lowered court's backwall and which functioned as to delineate the playground for the characters in the forest. This stage business intended to foreground the isolation that

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[186] See Peter Hans Göpfert: "*[Die Aufführung] ist spaßig, aber sie findet in Shakespeares Komödie […] soviel wie sich in diesem Wald ohne […] wirklichen Herzensschmerz und Liebesjubel, ohne ernsthafte Harmonie und Friedenssehnsucht […] auflesen läßt. […] Ein Theater zum schnellen Konsum. Zum schnellen Lachen, zum schnellen Vergessen. Zum Nachdenken gar nicht. Damit liegt es voll im Zeitgeist.*" ("[The production] is funny, but it finds as much in Shakespeare's comedy […] as one can pick up in this forest devoid of […] real heart-ache and passionate enthusiasm, without serious harmony and desire for peace. […] A theatre for quick consumption. A fast laugh, quickly forgotten. It is not made for reflection. In this, it hits the spirit of our time.") Göpfert is exemplary for many critics who did not realise the more sceptical and melancholic moments in this performance. The difficulty to realise this dimension, however, points at a certain unbalance in its purported ambiguity, namely at a predominance of burlesque elements.

[187] See the detail in appendix T. Maertens is standing right at the edge of the stage. The wooden wall behind him delimits the acting space to a minimum creating, thus, a slightly claustrophobic atmosphere.

Rosalind's doting on Orlando forced on her. Yet, the scenes at court, the torture scene in act II.1, the isolation of Celia or Orlando's suffering are not played in a different acting style, so that the criticism which these scenes may shed on the rather funny scenes at the court went easily unnoticed. Although the production team intended to problematise the utopian promise of burlesque play as marking out a sphere of personal and social freedom, it had problems to bring this scepticism across to the audience.

I shall return to the overall relation between the funny, burlesque and the painful, if not only political then at least power-ridden elements in the production in section 4.3.4. For the moment, I want to concentrate on the flattening effect of a predominantly burlesque, non-psychological usage of cross-casting as regards characters on stage. Peter Lohmeyer's impersonation of Phoebe is a good example of such cross-cast performances, and their limitations in relation to a supposed effect such as theatrical vibrancy (despite obvious entertaining qualities). Phoebe was visually presented with the help of costume and hair designer as a fiery gipsy. Koetz recalls with hindsight that Peter Lohmeyer had serious difficulties to perform a woman on stage. The man was always very present, and in his attempts to render a convincing woman, he often ran the danger of becoming too much of a man in drag. To avoid the impression of drag, which was the kind of "woman" that Thalbach never wanted on stage, the director suggested to Lohmeyer to play consciously the tendency to fall back into male attitudes, for instance lowering his voice more than usual, assuming male body postures, ostentatiously exposing the change of gender. Ingeborg Pietzsch judges that Lohmeyer is so convincing in this production, "*weil [er] immer wieder durch Stimme und Haltung bewußt den femininen Gestus unterläuft*."[188] The subversive effect was heightened by Phoebe's gipsy femininity, which Lohmeyer played as naturalistic as possible when in

the female manner.[189] For Koetz, the resulting character was a woman who had little talent for behaving like a woman, but never a transvestite, and Lohmeyer presented his own difficulty as a difficulty of the character in order to produce a comic effect, in which both layers of gender identity were clearly separated.

Where Shapiro believes that all-male performances produce an enigmatic profundity and complexity, Lohmeyer's Phoebe is an example of how burlesque cross-cast acting can produce a multi-faceted flatness, since the opposing genders of actor and character were always clearly separated and did not mix. This however, seems to be a characteristic of burlesque acting in general. In this character Thalbach clearly did not try to advance a tension between a humanist notion of character (Phoebe as a character in the tradition of psychological realism) and a late modern one (Phoebe as a mere theatrical figure with no psychological core). The variety of surfaces does not construct a whatever elusive profundity. Or in other words, no attempt is made to present both sides as part of a strained or stretched unity. They are allowed to exist side by side, which makes up for the burlesque effect. This theatrical figure knows no pain about her/his gender confusion. S/he is theatrically effective, because the theatrical confusion calls up the remnants of modern gender expectations in the audience, but in her/his play with surface structures, the figure advances a more late modern understanding of theatrical character. The absence of pain and suffering is exactly what makes the character effective as a proxy for those audience members, who want to forget about the social and emotional restrictions of their own lived reality, but less so for audience

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[188] "…because he again and again subverts the feminine gestus through voice and posture."

[189] All critics concurred that the production successfully avoided drag aesthetics, and that the audience followed Thalbach's proposal to take the male actors, whenever necessary, as genuinely female characters. Bernd Lubowski goes even so far as to state that there was no moment of ambiguity. This is clearly contradicted by other critics, but if we take his ambiguity as relating to sexual connotations, he is certainly right. As Cheek by Jowl's production, despite the metatheatrical androgyny, Thalbach's production was a relatively sexless affair. Koetz explicitly emphasised how little physical contact existed on stage between the actors. The seductive force did not lie in the bodies, but the language. See also 4.2.4.

members who expect a less utopian, and more socially transgressive construction of gender and identity. We can see in Lohmeyer's Phoebe how the burlesque acting tends to exclude audience empathy with the characters as social beings, which in turn tends to make the theatrical figures (and *pars pro toto* the production) politically less effective, since a relation between on stage and off stage worlds is more difficult to establish.[190]

Burlesque elements can be found in Michael Maertens' performance of Rosalind, too. At the end of act 1, when Rosalind suggests to put on male attire, Maertens suddenly changed his voice from the usual relatively high pitch too a consciously low male kind of ranting "*mag Frauenangst versteckt sein wie sie will/ nach außen sehn wir hart und blitzend aus*."[191] The ironising effect of this abrupt change in gesture is clear: it pokes fun on the macho attitude by exposing it as mere performance. The concomitant highlighting of metatheatricality affirms gender as a mere performatic sign open to both sexes.[192] Robin Detje perceives these metatheatrical elements as merely well-acted tricks that have both an ironic and entertaining effect.[193] And Michael Maertens made full use of such elements in this production, but in contrast to Phoebe, he did not limit the expressions of Rosalind to such rather blunt changes between femininity and

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[190] Yet, in 4.3.4, I shall discuss to what extent the production problematises its own burlesque assumptions exactly in respect to their political consequences. The dilemma between entertainment and political effectiveness expressed in the representation of Phoebe is one shared by the production as such.

[191] I.3.115-116. Literally, the translation goes something like: "may female fear be hidden as it may/ our outside shall be a hard and dazzling one." Cf. Shakespeare's line: "Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will/ We'll have a swashing and a martial outside."

[192] See also Maja E.Gwalter: "*Harsche Männlichkeit bringt er doppelbödig ins Spiel*." ["He brings into play harsh masculinity in an ambiguous way."] However, the metatheatricality also reveals a gap between Rosalind's treatment of rigid masculinity as something one can make fun of, and Duke Frederick's version of male rule, which is so severely oppressing that one can hardly make a joke at its expense on stage. Or should this be one of the messages that no political regime is as strict as to stop inventing jokes about itself? Since Thalbach grew up in the former GDR and hence within the tradition of absurd socialist joking, this may not be a far-fetched idea. For further discussion, see 4.3.4.

[193] "*[Maertens] hält die Beine artig beieinander. Er wackelt ein ganz klein wenig mit dem ein ganz klein wenig ausgestopften Hintern. Und er lässt, sobald er Männerkleider trägt, die aufgesteckten Haare bis zum Gürtel fallen. Das ist ein Spaß; besonders weil Maertens streng mit sich ist und den Selbstgenuß in Grenzen hält*." [In a well-behaved manner, Maertens keeps his legs tight. He slightly shakes his slightly stuffed bottom. And he lets his artificial hair fall down to the belt, once he is in men's clothes. That is fun; even more so since Maertens is disciplined and keeps self-indulgence strictly within limits.]

masculinity. Especially in Rosalind's encounter with Orlando, Maertens delivers, as Gwalter states, a variety of gender modifications that turned the figure into what was for her a charmingly androgynous being (on Maertens' androgynous performance, see appendices T and U).[194] However, despite the agreement on Maertens' artistic triumph as the actor playing Rosalind, more than one critic noted a stylistic gap between the vibrancy in the figure of Rosalind/Ganymede/"Rosalind" and the general atmosphere of the production. Roland Wiegenstein describes this difference between Rosalind, the other cross-dressed characters, and the concept of the production:

> *Während […] Stefan Merki, Marco Bahr, Peter Lohmeyer mit ihren Frauenrollen […] immer auch ein bißchen "Charleys Tante" mimen, ist Michael Maertens so etwas wie ein schieres Wunder. Dieser zarte, schlanke Mensch wirkt so androgyn, so verwirrend doppelgeschlechtlich, dass das Liebesspiel zwischen ihm/ihr und dem Orlando des Guntbert Warns bodenlos wird, das Zentrum des Stücks also funktioniert, obwohl es so eigentlich nicht funktionieren kann. Maertens ist Rosalind, ist Ganymed, ist Liebhaber und Frau, doch was da stimmt, überraschend, spannend wird, hat nichts mit dem „Konzept" der Thalbach zu tun, sondern nur mit ihrer Fähigkeit, einen hochbegabten Schauspieler zu seinen besten Möglichkeiten zu bringen. Das Konzept nämlich ist, genau genommen, ein Verstoß gegen die Absichten der Regisseurin, [in denen] weder sie noch Brasch dem utopischen Liebesversprechen […] trauen, das Shakespeare hier in mehreren Versionen durchspielt.*[195]

In other words, what Wiegenstein notes in Maerten's Rosalind is both the poetic and sexual vibrancy with its amorous gender utopia, and a general de-poeticising, anti-utopian intention in the aesthetics of the production as a whole. Peter Boss agrees that the main focus in this production is more on the comic travesty than on the possible

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[194] In a similar vein, see Chris: "*Maertens wirkt oft so feminin, daß seine mit leiser Ironie gespielte Rolle in der Rolle die Frage nach der Grenze zwischen Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit aufwirft*." [Maertens often appears so feminine, that his role, acted with a slight irony, questions the boundaries between femininity and masculinity.]

[195] "Whereas Stefan Merki, Marco Bahr, Peter Lohmeyer always mime their female characters a bit in the tradition of 'Charley's Aunt', Michael Maertens is something like an outright wonder. This tender, slim human being appears to be so androgynous, so disturbingly bi-gendered, that the love prate between him/her and Guntbert Warn's Orlando loses all fixed ground, that means that the centre of the play functions, although it shouldn't be able to function that way. Maertens is Rosalind, is Ganymede, is male lover and woman, but what becomes consistent, surprising and exciting in his performance has nothing to do with Thalbach's 'concept', but with her capacity to take one of the most talented young actors to his utmost possibilities. For this concept is, strictly speaking, a violation of her intentions according to which

vibrant gender irritations when a man plays a woman who pretends to be a man. Again, he singles out Maertens' performance as one that does not follow the overall thrust of the production and highlights that Maertens manages to perform a Ganymede who unmistakenly hides a woman behind his surface. Bernd Lubowski stresses how Orlando is clearly attracted to this ambiguous Ganymede as a man, and Susanne Heyden emphasises how Maertens' performance sharpens the audience's awareness of gender stereotypes only to confuse them in its own presence.[196] Maertens takes this awareness of separate gender identities as well as their confusion into the epilogue, as Koetz recalls:

> Maertens started to make a curtsy, but then stopped, because the figure realised that now a curtsy did not work anymore. Hence, he played the gender confusion right to the end, i.e., it became either a trap for the figure, or an ever existing possibility, according to the emotional reaction on the part of the spectator.

All reviews confirm that Maertens' character is the one who is most freely allowed to discover a dimension beyond a simple roughly cut gender identity.[197] His Rosalind confirms Shapiro's contention that the swift move from one layer of gender identity to another results in a giddy blurring of gender boundaries with possibly enigmatic effects as long as the different layers are not played for laughs, i.e., for an ironic exposing of incongruency as in Phoebe.[198]

Apparently, Maertens' achievement to build a balance between performing Rosalind's identity as the expression of a psychological complexity and a theatrical

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neither she nor Brasch allow themselves to trust the utopian promises for love, which Shakespeare puts on stage in various versions."

[196] "*Der schöne Knabe, der eigentlich eine Frau ist, die sich als Mann verkleidet hat, ist so männlich wie seine trampelige Cousine und so weiblich wie jedermann*." ["The handsome lad, who is in fact a woman who dressed as a man is as masculine as his clumsy cousin Celia and as feminine as anybody else."] Stephan Merki, who played Celia, recalls that Guntbert Warns indeed passed through moments of physical attraction when playing Orlando interacting with Maerten's various impersonations of Rosalind (Interview with the author, 20 Feb 04).

[197] Pietzsch writes that Maertens manages to perform the gender switch in Ganymede's encounters with Orlando without ever starting to parody gender or to take recourse to rather overacted theatrical means.

exteriority was crucial for this effect. On the one hand, he constructed the identity of this figure as an effect of subtle, but clearly marked performative actions, for example, the already noted change in voice as well as suggestive body postures (see appendices T and U); on the other hand, he allowed such performative gestures to suggest a profoundly complex emotionality, for example longing and assertiveness at the same time, as can be seen in appendix V. In this balance of opposites, Maertens found access to his figure beyond binary gender constructions: "*Ich muß zeigen, wie eine Frau glaubt, daß ein Mann ist. Je länger wir proben, um so mehr Vergnügen macht es. […] Jetzt finde ich eine dritte, eine menschliche Dimension*."[199] In my conversation with Franziska Koetz, she told me that the company saw this human dimension as an emotionality common to all human beings. But even if Maertens in his own experience as actor overcame a gendered order of emotions, his theatrical figure met an audience who was used to thinking and experiencing expressions of emotionality as gendered. Since Maertens probably discovered all kinds of emotional impulses in this figure, and with no need to censor them in either Rosalind or in himself, he may have identified with these emotions simultaneously as actor and character, therefore beyond a fixed gender identity, which explains the impression of a human dimension for him. It seems that in the case of Rosalind, this emotional human dimension was not exposed to theatrical ridicule as in Orlando's or Phoebe's cases. Maertens' Rosalind was allowed to blend opposing gendered emotions into a pervasive human emotionality, both with the help of the all-male cast, but even more so through a blending of burlesque with more

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[198] There is only one dissenting critic, namely Günther Grack, who stated that the irritating play with sexual identities comes to an end once Rosalind appears as Ganymede. Apparently, he did not share his colleagues' impression that Maertens managed to make the woman shine through his Ganymede.

[199] "I have to show how a woman believes a man to be. The longer we have rehearsed now, the more I enjoy it. […] Now I find a third, a human dimension."

realist acting elements. Not cross-casting as such created the effect of theatrical vibrancy, but Maertens' singular hybrid acting style.

This hybrid acting style may also have been sought after as a means to express some of the darker emotional aspects in Rosalind's behaviour. The production seemed to have been divided over the question of how to evaluate Rosalind's lust for play within the forest. Koetz confirmed that Rosalind was conceived as a character who, once reaching the forest as Ganymede, is totally enthralled by her/his lust for gender play and the opportunities it allows. Yet, she added that Rosalind is not a completely positive figure in this production. She is getting on the nerves of many people around her in the way she insists on playing – against the emotions of Celia and, later, Orlando. "The production also hints at a Rosalind who is an egocentric and rigid person," says Koetz.

Nevertheless, critics hardly perceived this darker side of Rosalind's ambiguous identity. Instead, they rather lamented that Rosalind is the only character who convincingly exhales a theatrically produced androgynous enigma. If this reveals a kind of traditional bourgeois desire for a serious utopian identity, Thalbach seems to have been adamant to negate such a horizon. Most important for this conclusion is scene IV.1 between Orlando and Rosalind-as-Ganymede, in which the audience is distanced from the theatrically enthralling illusion of an androgynous Rosalind wooed by a disturbed, but fascinated Orlando. In this scene, both actors sit on a wooden log which they use as a seesaw. This allows them to play with the question who is on top or gets the upper hand, thus visualising the power play in their hidden love prate. The alienating moment occurs when both actors suddenly look at each other, realise the theatricality of the

situation, and Michael Maertens starts to laugh.[200] The two actors completely leave their roles, before they manage to get back into character-acting.[201] Critics and audience received this supposed unintended break from theatrical illusion-making not as a flaw, but as an involuntary highlight of the actors' pleasure with the non-mimetic, metatheatrical possibilities in this all-male production, as if the pleasure of acting seemed to have carried away the actors. Yet, as we have seen, the element was deliberately introduced. According to Mikulicz's opinion about the central status of the scene for the production's aesthetic presuppositions, this scene then is an important hint that the show proposed identity as play and such playing itself as a kind of pleasure land. Although this laughter certainly may call upon emotional risks in theatrical cross-dressing, it was received by critics as an entertaining element, in line with the burlesque aesthetics of the production. In this scene, gender boundaries did not get blurred, but disentangled, by staging an acknowledged metatheatricality in the laughter. Again, the burlesque worked so as to distance audience members from the danger that may lie in the unresolved tension between blurred layers of gender identity for a straight guy like Orlando (and indirectly for the audience) in favour of a relieving laugh.

Of course, the laughter can be read as an implicit avowal of precedent emotional disturbances, but as a conscious trick, and through a focus on openly theatrical pleasure, it is introduced exactly to stave off emotional tribulations and moral embarrassment. It

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[200] See a description of the scene by Matthias Heine: "*Michael Maertens [wird] einmal vom eigenen komödiantischen Schwung fortgerissen. Er fällt aus der Rolle, bricht in Lachen aus und steckt dann auch noch sein Gegenüber an. Normalerweise eine Theater-Todsünde – hier nahm es das Publikum mit Szenenbeifall auf: als Zeichen, daß die da vorne auf der Bühne [...] genauso viel Spaß hatten wie wir im Parkett und auf den Rängen*." ["There is a moment in which Michael Maertens is carried away by his own comedian energy. He falls out of his theatrical role, bursts into laughter and infects his partner with it. Normally this is a deadly sin in the theatre – here it was received with open applause as a sign that they, there on the stage, […] had as much fun as we in the auditorium."]

[201] In fact, it was a conscious break from theatrical illusion-making. According to Koetz, the moment happened in one of the rehearsals, and Katharina Thalbach decided to maintain it. According to Thalbach's assistant Wenka v. Mikulicz, this moment sums up the concept of the production in a nutshell.

expresses joy in theatrical illusion-making and shares this joy with the audience, for, according to the critics, it is the actors not the characters who burst into laughter. It is not Orlando and Rosalind who giggle umcomfortably for maintaining a notion of each other they know to be illusionary, but the actors Maertens and Warns. Yet, both dramaturg Franziska Koetz and translator Thomas Brasch (see Linzer, 30) affirmed the production's presupposition that Orlando knew all the way through the forest that Ganymede is in fact his Rosalind. The ostentatious laughter invites the audience to construct with the actors the same complicit relationship that exists between Orlando and Ganymede, namely that it is all a game, full of pleasure and ultimately without risk, because it is an openly acknowledged illusion. Within the context of the production's burlesque aesthetics and with Maertens taking the initiative, the scene seems typical of the role this Rosalind plays in the forest of Arden. It is she who is responsible for the atmosphere in Arden as a magic forest in which all kinds of topsy-turvydom are licenced and possible, without having to care much about possible consequences. Maertens' laughter on the seesaw and its reception reveal the supposed subversive gender play as a theatrical gag, as if theatrical illusion making could not create more dangerous feelings. Cross-dressing in this production was not meant to be disconcerting or dangerous, but to constitute a moment of utopian, child-like and in this sense ingenuous pleasures. The theatrical vibrancy which this production at least momentarily seemed to have produced was not one based on blurring gender boundaries, but on a tension between burlesque and more realistic acting styles. The scene on the seesaw, however, did not express a disconcerting laughter about this tension, but one that fostered the burlesque qualities of the production.

Unfortunately, she did not want to tell me in a more discoursive language what this concept was (Telephone interview with the author, 12. 10. 03).

In this sense, the production brings on stage the late modern utopia of a socially de-contextualised identity that playfully crosses gender boundaries with no other effect than producing pleasure. It is characteristic of both late modern identities and the identities presented in this production that they pretend to be disconnected from nature and society. Under the effect of this impression, Ingeborg Pietzsch concluded: "*Was ist hier echt? Was unecht? Was Natur? Was Kunst? Alles ist ein Spiel*."[202]

Yet, even if Thalbach trusts the theatrical potential of these artificially natural and naturally artificial identities, she accepts one constraint created by the limits of the play's narrative. For even if the fantasies of the characters can transgress the boundaries of the sexed body, their erotic desire finally meets the limiting emotional necessity to give their relation a more lasting fundament. Desire gets constrained by nature and will get channeled by society. Orlando's sigh "*Noch länger kann ich nicht leben nur vom Denkvergnügen*"[203] is the threat for Rosalind-as-Ganymede to promise to present Rosalind "*aus Fleisch und Blut und ohne jedes Risiko*,"[204] as Brasch renders Shakespeare's "human as she is." In doing so, Thalbach's production does not subscribe to the utopia of free play as a durable erotic and social possibility.[205]

The analysis of the burlesque acting style as the central conceptual presupposition of the production suggests that Katharina Thalbach's *As You Like It* is the all-male production that most decidedly presents the forest of Arden as a magic and

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[202] "What is true in this place? What false? What nature? What art? Everything is but a game."

[203] "I can live no longer by thinking" (V.2.50) Brasch, in his translation, downplays the connotation of yearning. Instead, he focuses on the pleasure sought for so far by Orlando. He translates: "No longer can I live on the pleasure/joy of thinking." This line, once more, reveals the production's attitude towards Arden as a place where one can live on artful entertainment. Orlando's frustration can be seen as standing in for the production's critical position as regards the relation between theatrical arts and social reality (see 4.3.4).

[204] "in flesh and blood and without any risk". The expression "without any risk" is surprising, since the production did not foreground risk-taking as a constitutive feature of Orlando's action in Arden. Since Brasch did translate the play without thinking of an all-male performance, it seems implausible to link this phrase to possible gender confusions. I read it rather as a critical comment on the life to come as a settled down couple, which Brasch declared as nothing more than a great error (see Linzer).

liberated sphere for the characters' desire to play, without the necessity to assume consequences of their doing so in a lived reality: this imaginative and erotic paradise, in its extremely artistic origin, its licence and pleasures, can hardly get transferred beyond the moment of play itself. As we shall see later on, Thalbach's version is the most pessimistic as regards the possibility to confer on the lived social reality a touch of bliss originating in the polymorphous experience of the late modern amusement park called Arden, whereas the other three productions present a version of erotic love that proposes a more or less limited possibility for the eros of Arden to live on in the re-ordered world of the court, and hence in the lived social world of the spectators.

4.2 Erotic Vibrancy: Negotiating Fantasies and Bodies

4.2.1 Clifford Williams' Sublime Object of Desire: the Poetic Image

In his insights into what he saw as the heart of the play, Clifford Williams spoke of a poetic sexuality that permeates the playtext. As analysed in 4.1.1, this term seems to include a kind of hybridity, but in fact it was meant to describe the sublimation of sexuality into poetic imagery and language. Williams' conviction that Kott's ideas are "kinky and stimulating […] but they haven't much to do with the play" (*Observer*, 1 Oct 1967) further attests to his downplaying of the physically seductive characteristics of the production. The absence of theatrical vibrancy corresponds to the absence of erotic vibrancy. Neither Pickup as Rosalind nor any of the other actors seems to have foregrounded significantly the differences in their layers of identity and used them to produce erotically charged moments.

Yet, what Stallybrass ("Transvestism") describes in respect to the exposure of Desdemona's body in *Othello*, namely the directing of attention to real and artificial

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[205] On the political implications of this refusal to accept Arden as a compensatory utopia, see 4.3.4.

body parts within the playtext, is not only the transformation of sexuality into a poetic language, but also the sexualisation of poetry with clear physical innuendos in its attention to the actor's body. Williams denies the audience members such fantasies on the body. If Williams was allegedly hoping that spectators would not "settle down *completely* into accepting the masquerade" (*Observer*, 1 Oct 1967), he did little to fuel that bit of sexual and gender ambiguity. And he seems to have been aware of these self-imposed restrictions, since he shortly afterwards in the same interview disqualifies the cast's discovering of erotic ambivalences in the language as "perhaps we're feeling a bit too sanguine." He finishes off this analysis of the play's amorous characteristics not only by saying that "in a delightful but sober fashion the whole nature of love is discussed. Ultimately it's metaphysical, and by using men you give clarity to the dream-like quality", but also by affirming that even in Shakespeare's time most of the erotic implications of this casting convention had to get lost on the audience. One can conclude once more that he had little interest in reviving these implications and making them work on his contemporary audience.

We know nothing about the erotic fantasies or energies that got exchanged between the actors on stage. The apparent anxiety and apprehension palpable for Kenneth Pearson at the beginning of the rehearsals seemed to have given way to a much more relaxed atmosphere by the end of production time. Pearson locates part of this ease in the actors' discovery of "the safety of playing for character as opposed to impersonating women in general" (*Sunday Times*, 1 Oct 1967). What the four cross-cast actors technically did was to concentrate on language, and use female clothes and wigs also to produce feminine gestures that in this way come "naturally" and "help to avoid the camp flicks of the queer" (Pickup to Pearson). Thus, actors and director alike wanted to avoid the association of the performance with signs and gestures considered

"homosexual". Did the motivation to avoid homosexual innuendos contribute to the decision in favour of a metaphysical interpretation of love and draining the performance of sexuality? It is suggestive, but there is no clear piece of information on that.[206]

When the play came out on 3 Oct 1967 the critics hardly felt an erotic charge. With the exception of Richard Kaye's Phoebe, who impressed (and disturbed) a number of critics by her/his beauty and a perfect femininity in voice and gesture,[207] the performance of the other men did not produce an erotic entanglement on the part of the critics. Pickup's Rosalind was perceived as radiating "the lanky, coltish androgynous sweetness of a young Garbo, sex without gender, a platonic readiness to accept love as an emotion not yet awoken into physical passion" (anon., *Sunday Telegraph*, 8 Oct 1967). And apparently, Jeremy Brett's Orlando did little to rise this physical passion, nor did the socially lower couples Touchstone-Audrey and Phoebe-Silvius add much erotic charge to the "icy scene" (*Sun*, 4 Oct 1967). Their interplay is, for example, described as producing a "bucolic humour" (Philip Hope-Wallace, *Guardian*, undated). The critic of *Time Out* (13 Oct 1967) describes: "For the production the actor-actresses were garbed in wigs and flowing gowns – but there were no falsies and no falsettos. The result was a remarkably chaste performance free of disturbing homoerotic overtones." And the critic of the *Christian Science Monitor* (October 1967) can serve as an another example of how the overall effect of the performance was completely unerotic: "The casting of men as women has not brought with it suggestions of sexual perversion. On the contrary, its effect is to remove all thought of sex of any kind from the play. Mr. Williams […] gives a feeling of purity to the great love speeches that they have

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[206] For homophobia in the National Theatre board of directors, see 4.3.1.

[207] Typical in his bafflement but untypical in his frank admittance of erotic confusion is Martin Esslin, who confesses that "it's really disturbing if one also becomes aware, at the same time, that this pretty girl is a man" (*New York Times*, 15 Oct 1973). Richard Kaye's Phoebe is the character whose physical appearance comes the closest to transvestites in drag shows (see also Philip French and J.W.Lambert).

probably not had in any professional performance in the past three centuries." This concept of love as a search for a transcendental truth through the interaction of minds excludes the possibility of sexuality within this homosocial universe, for sexual desire on stage would again draw attention to the body, which Williams deems mere surface structure, and disrupt the search for "poetic sexuality" as a bodiless fulfilment of love's "interior truth". Worst of all, sexually charged moments would appear as at least partly fuelled by homosexual desire.[208] Given this "bliss" in non-sexual purity, one really wonders why Orlando should have had reason to cry: "I can live no longer on thinking" (V.2.50), for this purity does rest on the absence of the female body and the absence of real physical passion.[209] However, it also rests on a naturalisation of the male body and male bonding, achieved most of all through the natural bariton voice that the actors maintain throughout the performance. Together with the "natural walk" and the absence of genuine signs of passion these voices assure actors and audience that such men on stage are meant neither effeminate nor completely artificial.

Harold Hobson's insight is instructive for the production's treatment of eroticism: "When Touchstone whistles the ewes and rams out of their busy occupation he is doing more than routing sex out of a farmer's field. He is dismissing from the play all sense of the erotic" (*Sunday Times*, 8 Oct 1967). And Hobson feels safe to refute wholly Jan Kott's belief that the casting of males as women brings into the theatre a special quality of erotic ambiguity. Instead, "[i]ts real effect turns out to be that it puts eroticism, whether ambiguous or straightforward, out of the theatre altogether." From

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[208] Needless to say that Williams' focus on language and prosody is blind to the bawdy puns that work especially on the all-male stage, as Celia's scolding of Rosalind's love prant.Yet, in the promptbook, none of the bawdy and metatheatrical lines are cut. Apparently, actors and director did not make much of them in performance.

[209] Frank Marcus, approving enthusiastically of the artificiality and sexlessness of the setting and Pickup's performance, implicitly acknowledges Orlando's passion as a critical (and contradictory) element within Williams' production. He writes: "Orlando (Jeremy Brett) needs to drain away the sediments of virility" (100).

this point of view, Ralph Koltai's setting in the formal tradition of minimal art makes perfect sense. The transparent plexiglass objects and the plastic panels create a surrounding of pure rationality. In this place, beauty is an ascetic principle, not the exuberant manifestation of physical plenitude. *The Sunday Telegraph* (anon, 8 Oct 1967) writes about the distancing impact of the setting that "[n]o spectator is likely to feel either unduly embarrassed or improperly excited, but simply entertained as at an abstract ballet." Hence, the release from material foundations not only refers to the actors' bodies but to the whole utopian atmosphere of the play. Frank Marcus (100) could write that if Williams' Arden represents banishment, then it is "a banishment to a realm of aesthetic perfection." Thus, the production simply rejuvenates the traditional notion of green Arden as a realm of release from the pressures of civilisation and daily hardship by embedding this dream of Arden in a contemporary poetic language. Not only the stage, dominated by plastic and silver, but also the long dresses, whose feminine touch is as erotically stimulating as a bishop's vestment, contribute to a cool mixture of science fiction and haute couture (see appendix I).

All these formal decisions are fair enough, but their modernist and idealist language should not blind us to the hierarchies and repressive impulses which they embody. The poeticised, angelic interpretation of love clearly upholds the traditional dichotomy between soul and body, the intellectual and the sensual faculties. Williams' concept is only feasible on the basis that the body and its desires; "the surface structure" is of neglectable value when it comes to love, as if physical contact could not transmit emotional and spiritual energy of the same value as words do. Yet, the love object here is a human being, not God or any other expression of the Supreme Being. Thus, in this conceptual devaluation of the body both men, women, and their sensual experiences get

completely textualised, and in the wake of this transformation also devalued.[210] Neither their physical desires nor their social position, much less the effects of both on their psyche and emotionality can get adequately represented on stage.[211] If so, it disrupts the production's own premises, and it is of little comfort that these limitations also include by logical conclusion a male love partner. Williams' understanding of love is monologic in the sense that both partners submit to the goal of poetic sexuality. They do not submit to each other, but to poetic idealisations. The extent to which Williams' direction succeeds in making the spectator believe in this kind of love can be sensed in R.B.Marriott's words:

> But egotistic wiles and the usual selfish hopes, even though they may have barely traceable in the normal playing of Rosalind, are gone. It is as if an ideal of love had been realised, an ideal made manifest. The real truth of true lover brought to light, without spells or even a notion of possible canker. (*Stage*, 5 Oct 1967)

Except that the overall spell is insubstantial poeticality.

Yet, recalling Hobson's affirmation, that the Touchstone of the playtext is someone who engages in a number of bawdy conversations which in turn could clearly reveal his interest in inciting erotic innuendos and sexual seduction, one could now argue that Williams achieves conceptual coherence only through a serious violation of the playtext, but that is not my point.[212] The culturally interesting fact is that none of the critics argued on this premise against Williams' production. If they expressed their

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[210] Williams' essentialist and patriarchal slant becomes clear in an interview with *The Observer* (1 Oct 1967), in which he states his satisfaction with the "incandescent purity" underlying the love scenes. The purported reason is that "men are somehow better at this than women. Actresses, even the best ones, are likely to gush a little.[…] It might be interesting to do *Antony and Cleopatra* with a man as Cleopatra. There isn't a female around who can really play the role" (*Time Out*, 13 Oct 1967).

[211] As if Rosalind's teaching of Orlando were only an ironic game and not also shot through with enthusiasm for her sudden power position. Furthermore, how can Rosalind's stereotyping of women not be read as a form of realism, which simply reveals how women search for power in their own way? These objections are not meant to complain about the production's quality, but rather to clarify its character by pointing out what has been excluded.

[212] The production's promptbook proves that Williams left lines such as "He that sweetest rose will find/Must find love's prick, and Rosalind" (III.2.109-110). His production, however, sucessfully suppressed this humourous mixture of bawdy innuendos and metatheatrical awareness in favour of the "sexual purity that transcends sensuality."

reservations on the absence of eroticism, they hardly put forth a philological argument. Usually, they simply made a chauvinist remark on the sad absence of women, saying that Pickup's Rosalind would be wonderful, if only Vanessa Redgrave would be playing her (not surprisingly in this vein uttered by *The Sun*, 4 Oct 1967).

If the poetic sublimation worked to render the homosocial performance socially acceptable, it also declared the female body as neglectable when it comes to pure love. As the reviewer of the *City Press* (19 Oct 1967) put it: with "pure delight in the Shakespearean conceits and poetry […] [i]t just does not matter […] that the femininity exists solely in creative imagination". And the insight that this poetic woman is in fact a masculine fantasy goes unquestioned, since the ideal result seems to justify the theoretically problematic method: "Pickup and his director have devised a method whereby the boy-girl is not pretty (as he might be, quite acceptably, in a boys-school production) but an artificial masculine reconstruction of what's best in womanhood" (D.A.N. Jones, *The Listener*, no date available).

To sublimate the male body on stage, the director first rendered the female body invisible, and secondly denied the male bodies any physically seductive effect. Given this clear mind-body hierarchy, which denies the physically present actor to be the proxy of the audience's desire, what is then the suggested love object for audience members? Certainly not a material one. The contents taken from the reviews reveal that ultimately the love object that structures this version of an all-male performance is very much the same that Guy Boas uses as a justification for his all-male productions at the Sloane School: the sublime beauty of poetic language which, in the tradition of poetic drama, points at a metaphysical referent not of physical plenitude but of ascetic purity and perfection. With the "natural baritone voices" no artificial articulation can pollute the assumed and intended purity of language by bringing in questions of unstable

identity and “unmanly” physical desire. The true object of desire, which this production presents, is sublime poetic language and the ideal soul that it produces, but never an unstable body with polymorphous desires nor the enigmatic personality of the beloved. Or put differently: the all-poetic image, drained of sensuality, now is the fetish which attests both to the power of poetry as a sublimation of sexuality and to the longing for an airy nothing which is the absolute love object, namely in this case the ideal soul, not the ideal woman. Given the fact that this ideal soul cannot get embodied and expressed, but only hinted at, the act that can search for the interior truth in such poetic sexuality is contemplation: contemplation of an infinite beauty that is at the same time an impossible satisfaction.

4.2.2. Petrica Ionescu’s Pagan Object of Desire: Virility’s Plenitude

As presented in 4.1.2., one of the functions of the all-male casting in Ionescu’s production consisted in characterising both court and Arden as a world deprived of tenderness and loving emotionality. Instead, through the set and the grotesque acting styles court and Arden are marked by deep-running aggressions, a claustrophobic fear and an atmosphere of destruction. Although the playtext presents female characters, the overall impression was that there are no female characters in this Arden mainly because the aggressive atmosphere is so pervasively linked to a man’s world (mainly through the aggressive sexual images and their homosexual connotations) that this male context frames all figures with a neurotic, even paranoid masculinity. Furthermore, not even Knut Koch as Rosalind presented a character that was remotely identifiable as female. Of course, judging by the relation between gender, sexuality and character typing, Rosalind-as-Ganymede was the most complex figure. But this did not make her/him in any way an androgynous figure in this show, or a female with masculine character traits,

for, as Eggenhofer and Konarek recall, Koch did never intend to impersonate a woman. Instead, his performance as Ganymede suppressed the female character and was received as being predominantly about a male character. From the beginning of the performance until the marriage scene, the community on stage is marked as a male community. The shift from court to Arden was simply one from a politically to a sexually infused context. In both environments, Rosalind and Orlando seemed to have been understood as being in exile, and with them, bourgeois masculinity as such was metaphorically expressed as being out of place and out of balance.

The foregrounding of physical desires in general and of the male body in specific made it difficult for a 1976 bourgeois audience not to think of the sexual encounters as being depicted as homosexual ones. This association became emphasised by the fact that, for example, Corin always copulated from behind (Konarek), imitating anal intercourse and releasing thus all bourgeois prejudices about homosexual practices as well as possible taboos about heterosexual ones. Such anti-bourgeois provocation was most definitely intended in this interpretation of Shakespeare's script as one of a "psychotherapeutic doc." Such construction of a "homosexual" *As You Like It* was a direct attack against bourgeois heterosexuality and its repressive moral norms as well as the symbolic place of Shakespeare's plays as one of the hallmarks of bourgeois humanist culture.

In this context, the final marriage scene crucially represented a proposal to understand the production's erotic objective as an integration of female and male energies which could get interpreted as creating a more complete, possibly bi-sexual masculinity. I could not find out how the "beastly beauty" (Hirschmüller), played by Ionescu's girl-friend, got out of her cage, what stage business accompanied this release, but in V.4, we recall, she left the cage and became – Hymen! It is also unclear which

words of the monologue Hymen exactly spoke, but the mere fact that a figure more related to instinctual energies than heavenly atonement anounced the marriage ceremony refunctions the whole scene. The marriage is turned into a union of what was a reductionist masculinity with a released female, instinctual energy, in whose course the presentation of masculinity itself, its sexuality and aggressiveness, is transformed.

While the now released "cage woman" was delivering Hymen's speech, Rosalind came up from under the stage on a small hydraulic platform, stark naked. Knut Koch put both his forearms in front of himself to cover his body; one to cover his breast, the other to cover his genitalia. With the two lines "*Euch übergeb' ich mich, denn ich bin Euer*" (V.4.115-116),[213] Knut Koch lifted both forearms, one after the other, and showed the audience and Orlando his naked male body. There he stood down stage, arms wide open (see Konarek and Eggenhofer) – like a mixture between a call-boy and Jesus. Given the focus on the link between male sexuality and dominance throughout Arden, this picture represents a kind of masculinity that assumes a devoted attitude, which may even play with associations on sexual submission, since the words clearly acknowledge the adressee as being now in charge. It is a poignant invitation to the (male) audience to accept its sexuality as infused with homosexual desires.

What's more, the whole marriage scene culminated in the already mentioned dance accompanied by the Viennese waltz "*Es muss ein Stück vom Himmel sein"*, sounding out of the theatre's loud-speakers. The waltzing couples formed a redeeming contrast to the copulating ones of the forest scenes. Whatever may have remained in the audience's mind of the former aggressive masculinity hooked on power could have been superseded or even substituted by the image of a transformed masculinity, more playful

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[213] "To you I give myself, for I am yours". Ionescu used the classic translation by Schlegel as to give his provocation of the bourgeois Shakespeare tradition a stronger impetus. The German line is an almost literate translation of Shakespeare's blank verse, emulating the five-foot structure.

and at ease with its sexual impulses.[214] Yet, the emotional unwillingness in the Essen and Bochum audience to accept the homosexual associations implicit in the staging of the final scene impeded such a relaxed reception by spectators who identify themselves with heterosexual masculinity.

Before starting their swirl, the actors had taken off their costumes, remaining naked except for the strapped-on codpiece. Such stage business marked a step from the level of character onto the level of the actors' bodies. Hence, there was a kind of ambiguous, possibly half-hearted, sway to affirm male homosexuality as a lively alternative life-style.[215] Given the absence of women on stage, or what's more, the absence of clear feminine figures, an understanding of this dance as the affirmation of a liberated heterosexuality raises the question as to where the women's place would be in relation to liberated masculinity. This is equally valid for a bisexual interpretation. On the background of this absence, the actors cherishing their community in a final waltz seem to suggest an attitude such as "men are for pleasure, women for procreation." At best, one could see the final scene as a momentary intervention into heterosexual bourgeois subjectivity, a provocation more than an affirmation in whatever direction.

As far as the question of homosexual innuendos is concerned, the figure of Rosalind was special in so far as Koch seemed to have had a clear concept of Rosalind-as-Ganymede as a figure that thematizes homosexual love. He played Rosalind as a very active character, who expressed her desire for Orlando in a very affirmative way.[216]

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[214] Interestingly enough, Jaques remained absent from this dance, although other members of the cast joined the four couples in their swirl.

[215] Gerd Vielhaber is the only critic who suspected that the final scene might have been another parody. A view which finds some basis in Jaques "scathingly shrill good-bye speech" (Eggenhofer). As a parody, it would seal the hermetic quality of the production and push it decidedly into a bourgeois world without exit – as if it was meant to express a kind of post-history, all-encompassing scepticism. This is not necessarily against Ionescu's provocative concept, but it is definitely against Koch's intentions as expressed in the epilogue (see below).

[216] Gerd Vielhaber notes that both had "dramatically intense verbal fights" (*Bremer Nachrichten*, 29 July 1976).

Koch was the only one who survived Schroeter's cast, and he seemed to have been interested in a Rosalind who allows to reveal a different, less rigid form of masculinity, without falling into the female stereotype of passivity and swooning at the sight of blood.

Yet, the final scene is one more case in point to show how the all-male cast presented femininity as a mere ornamentation of a male body that, in turn, advances itself as the ultimate object of desire. When Koch presented his naked body, he spoke his words straight to the audience, not to the Duke and Orlando. The shock was not that he presented Rosalind's desire as male and homosexual (the audience suspected or knew that all the way through), but that he tried to provoke a reaction from the audience, for the Schlegel translation employs the traditional formal way of addressing by using the second person plural pronoun "*Euch*". Hence, it could refer both to Orlando or the Duke respectively, and to the audience. All would be grammatically correct. The same provocation, best understood probably as maintaining a repressed question open to the end of the production, characterised Koch's delivery of the epilogue, where he stood down stage, stark naked and facing the audience. In his case, Rosalind's kind offer to kiss the men in the audience who "had beards that pleased [her], complexions that liked [her], and breaths that [she] defied not" (V.4.215-218)[217] was more than a metatheatrical gag. It was a real offer.[218] His epilogue tested the audience members' willingness to accept homoerotic fantasies as part of their own (or their husbands' and lovers') identity.

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[217] Again, Schlegel's translation does not differ in meaning and register from Shakespeare's playtext: "[*Ich] würde jeden küssen, dessen Bart mir gefiele, dessen Antlitz mir zusagte und dessen Atem mir nicht zuwider wäre*."

[218] For anybody who doubts Koch's capacity to express this authentically, I want to refer to his autobiography *Barfuß bin ich dein Prinz* where he describes his life as actor and, simultaneously, gay call-boy.

If Ionescu himself intended this direction, we cannot know. Judging by his conception of Arden, he was more interested in denouncing bourgeois subjectivity as paranoid or neurotic, fundamentally constructed out of power impulses. If any question of sexual politics was implicated in this confrontative "therapeutic" intention, it derived from the necessity of this masculine identity to transform its sexuality and, consequently, its way of object choice. As long as the dark energies remained in the cage, male behaviour and desire were ruled by power instincts. Ultimately, the performance was about integrating this beastly energy into the men's world.

Yet, what happened to Hymen after she had spoken her ritual words? None of the interviewed actors could recall a clear picture, and this dubious fate of the only female voice, possibly ending in silence after redeeming a reductionist masculinity, seems indicative of the whole treatment of femininity in Ionescu's concept. Not only that "female" energy is brought on stage in the traditional form of man's instinctual other, its main function is to serve the male strife for self-perfection. Once symbolically incorporated into the men's world, by transferring her instinctual energy as a gift to the men, the female figure has no function anymore, no reason to exist.

Although, through the image of the dance, the liberated male sexuality overcame the clear-cut dichotomy of master and servant that pervades the court and Arden, it did not overcome the symbolic dichotomies of bourgeois sensibility, for it pictured erotic energy as feminine and rendered real women absent. Sexual vibrancy, as expressed in the waltz as a possibility to swirl around a common but fictitious centre, was only created for a male-to-male-sensuality. Femininity was a masque men could take on to seduce one another, or an energy to take in and become more complete. This dancing sexual liberation expanded the scope of their virility, but it did not include women into

its universe nor relate to them in any way. For women in the audience, this sexual liberation had little to offer.

4.2.3 Declan Donnellan's Queer Object of Desire: the Destabilising Power of Play

Donnellan's bare stage and non-illusionist mimesis suggests that the production may have tried to achieve a similar spiritualising effect as did Williams' show in 1967. Solomon, for example, received the erotic universe in this all-male version as one that infused sexuality with an air of artificiality (26) and Claire Bayley (*What's On* 11 Dec 91) states that the production was "a surprisingly sexless affair". Both implicitly concur on the relative lack of focus given to the actual physical body on stage. On the other hand, Bayley recalls as one of the most exciting moments a scene where the sex of actor/character is foregrounded as to create a disturbing effect. In the "wonderfully ambiguous scene where Rosalind reveals herself to the world-weary Jaques by placing his hand on her breast, he recoils shocked and revolted."[219] This scene is a clear proof that Donnellan is not interested in rendering the body totally meaningless, producing thus a notion of love as spiritual purity. Rather, he denies the actor's body prominence, so that he can provoke the characters on stage and the spectators off stage to engage in a fanciful journey which challenges the conventional, socially imposed limits of imagination. Solomon, for instance, declares that this ambiguous erotic artificiality stimulated in her "a taboo-smashing promise of erotic variety and sexual adventure"

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[219]Jaques, different from Orlando, does not want to engage in the pleasures of open make-believe by accepting "woman-disguised as man" as a possible object of play in his same-sex desire. In the 1991 production, this homosexual Jaques surprisingly is as compulsory a figure as, for instance, were Victorian male spectators who insisted together with the leading actresses on the femininity of the female character disguised as man and in breeches. No blurring of sex and gender is allowed. In the video at the Victoria and Albert Museum, taken from the 1995 tour, Jaques in fact lies down in Ganymede's lap and gets comforted by him. They get interrupted only by Orlando appearing on stage. The 1994/5 production toned

(26). This promise is basically the result of what is indicated, not of what is shown, on stage.

Donnellan, however, does not propose that the characters' erotic practices exist beyond the confines of their respective socio-economic context. This becomes clear in another scene that invites the audience to accept this production as infused with a variety of ambiguous erotic constellations. In I.2., Coates and Lester enter the stage as Celia and Rosalind and lie down on an oval cloth (see appendices N and O). While Celia is talking about her expected heritage and the possibility to leave it to Rosalind, she accompanies this description of personal wealth and political power with two fingers moving up and down Rosalind's back. The effect is not only to make visible her affection as "dearer than the natural bond of sisters" (I.2.266), but also to shed a darker light on Celia's necessity and desire to secure Rosalind's presence and love by trying to comfort her. In Donnellan's production, this moment, in its problematisation of the relation between power and love, foreshadows the more playful interaction between a dominant Rosalind-as-Ganymede and a rather submissive Orlando. In addition to these "lesbian" innuendos and their problematisation, the production uses Simon Coates' slightly campy Celia to bring gay aesthetics into play. When s/he kisses Rosalind's calves and bottom, the audience is completely aware that it is two men performing on stage. Hence, male and female homoerotics almost simultaneously hover around, without gaining more importance than being a teasing sting for audience members who would like to see a clearly gendered erotic object on stage.[220]

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down Jaques' erotic interest in Ganymede, and erased his erotic shock when confronted with the Rosalind behind Ganymede. This change emphasises the utopian emotional qualities of an erotics of make-belief.

[220] Peter J. Smith is more impressed by the homosexual innuendos than I am. His impression fosters Lisa Jardine's contention (and implicitly Solomon's reaction to Lester's Rosalind does so, too) that "whenever Shakespeare's female characters […] draw attention to their own androgyny[…] the resulting eroticism is to be associated with their maleness rather than their femaleness" (206-7).

The effect of this double-coding is to render sexual object choice a predominantly private affair, and ultimately of little political importance. Who cares whether there are lesbian or gay or heterosexual impulses involved? What difference does it make? None at all in this production. What is not marked as a merely private statement, however, is Celia's strategy to secure Rosalind's affection by infusing her seductive gestures and touches with political and economic power. In this scene, Donnellan's and the actors' gestural options suggest that any sexual object choice can express the wish for genuine love, but simultaneously possess connections to political and economic power structures.

Different from late modern notions of liberated sexuality, this production does not create a polymorphous utopia free of power questions. The production makes clear that all erotic encounters and impulses (Rosalind and Celia, Rosalind and Orlando, Le Beau and Orlando, Jaques and Ganymede, Touchstone and Audrey, Ganymede and Phoebe, Celia and Oliver) are infused by these power impulses to dominate one's erotic partner and secure her/his presence. In doing so, it takes up a motif that runs through the playtext as far as the epilogue. Both Rosalind's play with Orlando and the epilogue's invitation openly acknowledge the necessity to come to terms with this impulse towards domination, and the question is then what opportunities does the play of cross-cast make-belief offer for erotic practices within a world that is also marked by the wish to dominate the object of desire and control his/her presence and behaviour.

In general, the production sets the erotics of a playful flexibility exercised in Arden against an erotics of domination typical of the court. Whereas the ways of make-belief – as performed for instance in the conversations and interaction between Ganymede-as-Rosalind and Orlando – confound clear-cut binary models of masculinity and femininity, the production constructs Duke Frederick's court as a place where these

separations are strictly upheld and no self-conscious theatricalisation takes place. This court is marked by traditional bourgeois homophobic masculinity whose social bondings function along the lines of aggressive persecution of homosexual men. Such characteristic is impressively visualised in an interpolated scene between Le Beau and the courtiers in Act 1. Le Beau gets sexually harassed by a bunch of courtiers who drive him along the backstage, finally grab him to take his trousers off, until Le Beau falls into a desperate hysteria crying for help. The sexual content of the scene is clearly fundamental to the courtiers' sadist pleasure. They only let him off with the appearance of Rosalind and Celia. The overevaluation of aggressive masculinity becomes more evident in the wrestling scene, in which the men take up a rope to form the wrestling arena and move clockwise, stamping their feet, howling and cheering Charles' performance of ruthless physical strength. Illuminated by a cold blue light the wrestling scene clearly harks back to fighting as a male initiatory rite. Orlando is a somewhat ambivalent figure in this act, since in his behaviour and ideals he hardly conforms to the world of this courtly fight club, but also he shows himself extremely self-conscious and uncomfortable when approached by Le Beau. In the context of Le Beau's characterisation, his plea to Orlando "Sir, fare you well. Hereafter, in a better world than this, I shall desire more love and knowledge of you" (I.2.273-5) gains clearly a melancholically homoerotic connotation.

Hence, the world of polymorphous erotics commonly associated with the Forest of Arden is also explicitly staged as present in the courtly world. However, what becomes dominant in the forest is marginalised in the court, as the reactions of the courtiers and the wrestling scene with its franticly aggressive homosocial bonding make clear. Orlando is an interesting figure in this respect, since he is upset by Le Beau's intimacy, but will later in the forest accept to engage in a playful flirt with Ganymede –

albeit under the important premise that it is only a play of make-belief. Against the background of what counts as accepted masculinity and femininity in court, the production clearly establishes the play of make-belief as presupposition of a utopian erotic sensibility that overcomes traditional, strictly binary forms of masculinity and femininity. To promote this sensibility the production invites the audience to imagine an erotics with the beloved partner in which the swapping of gender roles (see the usage of the apron in the marriage scene) and the concomitant transgression of stereotyped behaviour are an integral part of the seductive play of make belief.

Solomon captures the heightened erotic engagement on the part of spectators in these imaginative stimulations. On the existing, yet ultimate unimportant, homosexual thrust in this all-male universe, she opines that

> [i]t didn't much matter that Lester's lust wasn't aimed directly at me because its eroticism was less a function of representing male homosexual and homosocial desire than of the demands made on the spectator's active and conscious imagination as necessary to the construction of character and dramatic event. (27) [221]

Within an all-male cast, the suspension of disbelief and the suggestive qualities of theatre gain a decidedly erotic component, for it is invariably an invitation to use a male body in order to fantasise an erotically attractive female person. In Cheek by Jowl's *As You Like It*, this invitation explicitly goes for characters like Orlando, Touchstone, Oliver and Silvius, and for the spectators as well. If the characters are shown to fantasise the desired partner, the spectators also imagine more intensely the erotic *scenario*, since the gap between the sex of the actors and the characters does not allow to consume this *scenario* as granted. In other words, the theatricality of the show

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[221] Solomon's emotional reaction, which led her to argue against a restriction of the show's "taboo smashing" erotics to homosexuality, contradicts Gay's impression that "masculinity remains natural, essential, and the ground of sexual attractiveness in what was finally a homosexual love story" (As You Like It 88). Gay does not catch Solomon's point that Cheek by Jowl's performance is open for identificatory readings by female spectators, although it insinuates a strong homoerotic atmosphere.

invokes indulging in fantasies and fantasising as an erotically charged form of risk taking. This is what both the actors in the forest and the spectators in the theatre do.

On the level of character, the production treated not only Orlando and Rosalind as fully developed characters, but also avoided to present Audrey and Phoebe as mere clichés of female behaviour. Although the production treats them outwardly as types by dressing Audrey as a flirtatious country girl who dresses up for the marriage in a mini skirt, and Phoebe as another attractive, self-indulgent "sex-pot", as far as their feelings are concerned, they are not denounced as expressing stereotyped emotions. They are as genuinely in love as Rosalind and Orlando are.

What becomes palpable on this level is the wish on the part of the characters that the desired and beloved stage figure would fulfil the expectation his/her lover holds of him/her. Of course, this is never the case in real life. And Cheek by Jowl's emphasis on the theatrically produced instability in their usage of the all-male cast, which allows the production to make clear for the spectators that what the characters have to deal with is the gap between their fixed fantasies and the elusive reality. In this production, the awareness of such fluidity in the object manifested itself in complicit laughter on the part of audience members, whenever the dialogue on truth played with the discrepancy between appearance/role and actor: in III.3, when Touchstone declares that he wishes Audrey not to be honest, but poetical; in III.5.73, when Rosalind's warns Phoebe that she is "falser than vows made in wine", and various times throughout IV.1, for instance, when after Orlando having affirmed Rosalind's virtue against Rosalind-as-Ganymede's prediction that he will wear horns, Ganymede simply retorts that he is his Rosalind. Such giddiness of truth is the unreplaceable ingredient so that "the whole sexual atmosphere on stage has danger, wit, charm, absurdity, excitement" (Macaulay, *Financial Times* 27 Jan 95). But it also provides the chance to ask some deeper and

more disconcerting questions about the functions of erotic fantasies. Thus, both between the character themselves and between characters and spectators, the self-conscious theatricalisation of identity openly interrogates the possibility to fix the desired person in a preset identity. Cheek by Jowl's production shows how a non-illusionist theatricality produced by an all-male cast increases the play's critique of a sentimental form of erotic fantasising, in which characters and spectators still believe (or pretend) to know what they see and control what they imagine, or more structurally spoken, in which they are allowed to believe that their object of desire conforms to their visual and indirectly emotional expectations.

These kinds of sentimentalising erotic fantasies correspond to a mimetic aesthetics and a construction of male and especially female bodies on stage which conventional bourgeois mixed-cast productions of *As You Like It* frequently use. Given a male bourgeois spectators' view as dominant, such sentimentalising mimetic aesthetics allows for a voyeuristic look at the performance, which is almost impossible in Cheek by Jowl's production, for it equally de-materialises eroticism and destabilises the gender of the desired object.[222] In this subversion of voyeurist interests, Cheek by Jowl's construction of erotic interest critically harks back to the human tendency to fetishise characteristics in the beloved and construct such beloved as a fixed source of plenitude at the disposal of the fetishiser.[223]

Of course, the narrative development within the playtext itself makes sure that these ideas get exposed as what they are: sentimental fantasies in Donnellan's terms, and narcissist ones from a psycho-analytical point of view. Yet, Cheek by Jowl's production shows that an all-male cast can heighten the audience's awareness of the

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[222] Charles Spencer, for example, voices his discomfort as "hetero viewer" in face of Lester's ambiguously attractive Rosalind (*Daily Telegraph*, 6 Dec 91).

impossibility to fill up this gap between a phantasmagoric love object, who lacks a life of his/her own, and the living beloved who does not fit into this fantasy. Together with the word-plays of the playtext, this all-male *As You Like It* stages the relation between desire and "truth" in such a way that it produces the insight that all erotic fantasies are partly doomed to fail since the ambiguity in lived reality always thwarts expectations. In doing so, it fulfils one contention of Sedinger, namely that all-male productions confound epistemological stability and call into question the adequateness of a category like "truth." Given the cultural circumstances of the 1990s, it would certainly be wrong to proclaim this effect as a still deontologising one. What's more, Solomon's review makes us aware that Cheek by Jowl's production can be seen as to follow Sedinger in another line, namely in consciously displacing the libidinal investment from a search for truth in love to the play of difference in love – a displacement which is already prepared for in the play between Rosalind and Orlando. Since Orlando treats Ganymede in the same way as spectators treat the characters on stage, namely with a conscious suspension of disbelief, one can analyse the erotic effects of the all-male cast in this scene as possibly parallel to the effects on the relation between audience members and characters on stage. Just as Rosalind-as-Ganymede goads Orlando to treat him as if he were the woman Orlando desires in order to increase his awareness of Rosalind's complexity, the production provokes the audience to cherish the gender ambiguities on stage and engage imaginatively in the construction of these characters as erotically attractive figures on stage, which amounts to accepting their *scenarios* as possible arenas for the spectators' own plights and desires – regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

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[223] In his ideal love prate, when drawing on the Renaissance blazon tradition, Orlando is fetishising Rosalind. As such, he can rightfully speak of her as "his" Rosalind.

Critics concur on Lester's performance as expressing a thrilling and perplexing gender ambiguity that in turn produces in its interaction with Orlando if not an androgynous, then a magically hybrid erotic atmosphere. They also perceived how Orlando becomes in Arden a figure that is most easily considered as bisexual (see Macaulay, Nightingale, Solomon). Such a term seems to me misleading, however, since what is at stake in this production is not an actual sexual orientation, but a willingness to engage in a play of make-belief that transgresses fixed object choice. The general impression Macaulay gets from the transitionary moment, when the production keeps both court and Arden on stage before actually moving into Arden, goes for the erotic atmosphere of this show as well: "At such a moment, being in two places at once and feeling the connection and contrast between them, yet having no scenery to support us, we sense just how magical theatre can be" (*Financial Times*, 27 Jan 95). Rosalind-as-Ganymede and Orlando's interaction is such one long moment of double-play. We can feel the pain of the characters, for instance, when Ganymede makes shine through a Rosalind who visibly struggles with her pain and anger that Orlando does not recognize her, or when Orlando sighs that he can no longer live by thinking. The most thrilling elements may be those singular moments when spectators become aware of this play of make-belief as a negotiation between excitement and embarrassment. Edwardes, for instance, notes that "for the first time it becomes clear how strange and brave it is that Orlando should agree to practice his wooing on a man, hiding his embarrassment by slapping Ganymede regularly on the back. There is a definite frisson as one's sense of gender becomes increasingly confused" (*Time Out*, 11 Dec 91). She perceives a similar effect in the 1994/95 touring production (*Time Out*, 18 Jan 95):

> Audiences may find the gender-bending a tingling sensation, but it frightens the life out of Orlando when he lifts Rosalind's veil at their wedding and discovers that Ganymede and the woman he loves are one and the same person. We feel

> something similar when Orlando and Rosalind sink into a long, searching kiss, joltingly reminding us that what we are watching are two men.

The characters' erotic behaviour, their willingness to accept a proxy for their desires that is (or convincingly seems to be) even of the other sex, is perceived by quite a few critics as clearly at odds with common expectations on how to deal with erotic fantasies. In those moments, it becomes clear how theatrical vibrancy produces a type of erotic vibrancy that can be achieved only with a same-sex cast, in this case, all-male.

Within the playtext, the game between Orlando and Rosalind revolves around the importance of recognising the uselessness of ideal love objects. Ganymede teaches Orlando that Rosalind is also full of mischief and knows how to play an argumentative power game, whereas Orlando teaches Rosalind-as-Ganymede that her fantasies of absolute love are unfullfillable and contradict other compromises he has with the male world of the exiled court. Just as Ganymede presents a Rosalind who shows herself almost a shrew to a sentimental Orlando, Orlando plays someone who does not fulfill the needs of an enticing, but sentimental Rosalind, when he leaves her to serve Duke Senior. The play of make-belief allows to negotiate these harsh realities without losing the erotic attraction, as Orlando's final kissing of Rosalind demonstrates. In fact, the erotically charged role-playing between Ganymede/Ganymede-as-Rosalind and Orlando is made of instances in which seduction and self-recognition, frustration and desire unite to form a complex amalgam of sentimental, narcissist impulses and disconcerting submission to the painful realities of a social existence. The production's non-illusionist theatricality, which does openly acknowledge that the character is not what s/he is meant to be, supports this tension by keeping open – just like Touchstone's famous "if" – a sphere of interpretative freedom that is aware of the fundamental otherness of the beloved partner if compared to one's own fantasies and allows to negotiate one's private desires and the other's existence independent of these desires.

Cheek by Jowl show that to queer a character on stage through cross-casting and cross-dressing does not simply mean to invent a hybrid or polymorphous object of desire, but to accept the hybridity as expression of a person's inner independence of the desiring subject's wishes. In so far as the characters can adjust their desire to this hybrid existence, they accept a necessity to queer their own existence and desire. Gender is only the most salient instance in Cheek by Jowl's all-male production in which characters on stage have to do so. Given the imaginative investment in the characters on the part of the spectators, the production invites them to acknowledge the liberating effects of erotic make-belief. In this context, Benedict Nightingale (*The Times* 5 Dec 1991) perceives Orlando's queered desire as "the closing moral of a lively […] evening." And the production underlines this partly erotic, partly political effect when, after the kiss, Rosalind engages Orlando in an interpolated final dance reminding of a Tango with bits of Flamenco infused in it, whose change of rhythm and change of the leading position hint at a change in who adopts the passive and the active role. In this change and through two male actors, one loses a clear notion of who plays the female and who the male part. In this dance fixed gender identities dissolve into a succession of performances based on gender stereotypes, but neither of the two characters is completely fulfilling or submitting to them. When eventually the other couples fall into this dance and perform a marriage rite based on this swapping of gender power positions, the production creates an erotic utopia in which people, though embedded in the symbolics of the patriarchal power system, are not completely dominated by it and can make it work for their mutual pleasures.

The interpolation of an Orlando who, in the marriage scene, reacts ambiguously to the unveiled Rosalind – with dismay and desire, first running away from her before consciously accepting her and his own desire and love for her – shows that the

production is aware of the potential frustrations as well as opportunities that lie in the play of make-belief. The dimension of erotic complexity in this production can only be recognised if one perceives how this ambiguous play of make-belief and gender difference is used not to produce an effect merely of fundamental uncertainty, but of inner freedom and complexity. For if, for Orlando, the interaction with Ganymede represented the utopian possibility of some kind of free play with gender liminalities, the unveiling of Ganymede as Rosalind implies the question of how to reconcile this dream with existing individual and social lived realities – a reality Rosalind-as-Ganymede was aware of all the time. As we shall see in 4.3.4, the production uses this moment as to emphasise a) the potential liberty of individual expression in relation to social norms, and b) the impossibility to exist outside social pressure. Cheek by Jowl staged a play with imaginative gender switching that did not subscribe to late modern notions of the volatility of desire and liberty of self-invention.

4.2.4 Katharina Thalbach's Narcissistic Object of Desire: the Affirmative Power of Play

The element that probably characterises the attitude towards eroticism in Thalbach's production is never directly on stage. This element is the programme, which is formed by 33 cards, only one being the card with the information about the participating people. The other 32 cards are part of a game, whose principles allow random and endless connections between them. Hence, the structure of the game can be seen as bringing into relief the endless vicissitudes of erotic desire and love. It reflects the erotic licence in the forest of Arden, but also puts the question of an arbitrariness within this erotic dream that hints at a melancholic undercurrent, as if the utopia of the erotic free play with gender identities was only the other side of love's vanity.

Franziska Koetz recalls hers and Thomas Brasch's contribution to this game:

> The idea for the card game was a game from the eighteenth century, a kind of landscape puzzle in which all pieces fit together, no matter how one combines them, so that one gets always a new, but consistent landscape. I remembered that game, and thought it might be a good idea to adapt this principle to comment on love relationships. That's how the side with Toffolutti's drawings came about. When I told Thomas Brasch about it, he said, "cool, let's make a real game out of it" and that's how he came up with these sentences, which can get combined in an arbitrary way, and four suggestions how to use and play with these sentences. His idea became side A of the card-board game.[224]

Brasch's sentences are full of puns and contradictory formulations that emphasise the inability of lovers to understand each other in their wishes and desires as well as the purported helplessness in face of their turbulent and often ambiguous emotions. Given the fundamental function of the game as an emblem of the production's attitude towards erotic relations in *As You Like It*, and especifically in the forest of Arden, it becomes clear that the show was not primarily interested in erotic vibrancy as the effect of gender confusion. Rather, both were taken for granted within the much more important principle that lovers are exchangeable and eros a fickle drive anyway, very much following Touchstone's dictum (II.4.51-52) that "true lovers run into strange capers." The overall argument that runs through Brasch's sentences and their endless combination is a strong melancholy as regards the possibility to understand love or make it last. The most cited card in the press directly played on such resigned attitude, namely that the future of any passion is emptiness:

> *...kommt dieses Wort/ Geschlecht von gut ach/ nein von schlecht und/ der Verlust liebt sie die / Lust und das was bleibt/ Ist nur was sich an nichts/ Mehr reibt und...*[225]

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[224] For a visual impression, see appendix S.

[225] "…does this word/ sex derive from good ay/ no from bad and/ the loss she loves the/ lust and what remains/ is only that which does not/ rub itself on anything anymore…" The German word *Geschlecht* can signify *sex*, or *gender*, or the sexual member of man or woman. Brasch, of course, plays with all of these meanings.

In his interview with Martin Linzer, three days after the production's opening night, Brasch affirmed his view of such kind of love as supposedly Shakespearean:

> *[B]ei Shakespeare [kommt] mit zunehmendem Alter immer wieder die Frage: Was ist Liebe? Und er kommt immer mehr zu der Feststellung: die gibt es nicht! Da spielen zwei Geschlechter nach unterschiedlichen Spielregeln, und einer kennt die Spielregeln des anderen nicht, deswegen kämpfen sie miteinander, gegeneinander. Für Shakespeare eine bittere Wahrheit, unterhaltsam vermittelt, das schwierigste was es gibt, nicht tiefsinnig-trübsinnig […].*[226]

Therefore, as much as Touchstone does, the card-game questions the purported truth in passionate love, for in these sentences one can rather detect the pains of erotic vanity than the pleasures of erotic vibrancy, so that the effective ambiguity is constructed between enthusiasm and frustration as possible effects of the wish to play around with erotic desire, and not between titillating gender uncertainty and erotic shock. Due to this ambivalence about the value and function of erotic desire for the characters, the most central feature concerning erotic titillation in this all-male production seems not to have been gender confusion, but the ways how it undercuts erotic tension by using the burlesque and the poetic.

Although it would probably mean going too far to contend that critics and audience felt this embedding as constituting juvenile eroticism, critics conspicuously noted that the burlesque atmosphere drained erotic tension on stage (see Wiegenstein, Schaper, Göpfert).[227] Pietzsch is not alone in stating that the playing with gender caused the most comic effects, but not erotic confusion. Even if we assume that this impression is more pertinent to the supporting characters Touchstone, Audrey, Phoebe and Silvius respectively, Pietzsch shares with most reviewers the impression that all in all

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[226] "The older Shakespeare becomes, the more frequent appears the question: what is love? And more and more often he comes to the conclusion: it doesn't exist! There are two sexes who play according to different rules, and one doesn't know the rules of the other, that's why they fight with and against each other. A bitter truth for Shakespeare, communicated in an entertaining way, the most difficult thing to do, not in a purportedly deep, melancholic way."

Thalbach's *As You Like It* stages a kind of erotic love that lacks passion and engulfing power, i.e., deep emotionality.[228] Situations that might be received as transgressive or at least kinky, such as those in which Celia manifested her feelings for Rosalind, were played in a rough comical style that desensibilised against much of the emotional frustration in this character.[229] This down-playing of erotic energy might be a result of the necessity to avoid the exaggerations of drag aesthetics, which the production all in all convincingly shunned (see, among others, Gwalter, Hartmann). But it might also be the effect of another aesthetic capacity within all-male productions apart from playing on the burlesque, namely the effect of poetic de-naturalisation of identity, and consequently, of emotions, similar in effect to Clifford Williams' production in 1967, although using completely opposite theatrical aesthetics. Both styles share a strong non-realist conception of theatre, but whereas the burlesque foregrounds the physical world, poeticisation shuns the physical materiality and emphasises the intellectual, spiritual side of human existence.

With the exception of Maertens' Rosalind, Thalbach's consciously burlesque aesthetics produced rather types than what is called round characters on stage. This effect goes not only for the cross-cast character, but also for Orlando,, whose emotionality is exaggerated as to become merely trite doting. The burlesque emphasised the artificiality within all characters' identities and, consequently, of their emotions. Even those critics who reacted positively to the emotional and erotic atmosphere on

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[227] Göpfert's headline is characteristic: "Erotic feelings on a playground's seesaw," alluding to the moment before Maertens and Warns burst into releasing laughter. He is explicit about his impression that this production knew no other motivation behind its all-male cast but its capacity to generate "pure fun."
[228] Schaper, for instance, states that hunting for love in this *As You Like It* has "mainly sportif character, nothing metaphysical."
[229] Compare Chris, critic of the *Ruhr-Nachrichten*: "*Stefan Merki als Rosalinds Cousine Celia dagegen ist fürs grob Komische zuständig, wenn er erkennen läßt, daß er/sie Rosalind mehr als nur verwandschaftlich zugetan ist*." ["Stefan Merki as Rosalind's cousin Celia, on the other hand, is responsible for the more rough kind of comedy, when he gave the impression that s/he is fond of Rosalind

stage singled out the encounters between Orlando and Rosalind-as-Ganymede to do so, and used words that foregrounded the non-mimetic, poetic atmosphere and the distance to mere physical attraction.[230] Under these "de-naturalising" conditions, the same-sex attraction is perceived without any shock or surprise: "*[Maertens] gelingt als Frau in Mannkleidern ein Liebespiel mit dem Orlando, bei dem nicht mehr die Stimme der Natur durchschlägt, sondern eine Mann-Mann-Beziehung spürbar wird*"(*Theater Rundschau* 5/93).[231]

In line with this lack of psychological interest, dramaturg Franziska Koetz emphasises the production's disinterest in focusing explicitly on questions of sex, gender, and object choice.[232] In the interview, she expressed the opinion that throughout the performance the production used its aesthetic honesty about the fact that it was men playing all roles to that end that the all-male casting "became completely unimportant, even [producing] moments, when gender became so neglectable (especially in moments of great emotional pain) that the focus was on a human being."

In general, Koetz states that the "the main aphrodisiacum in this production was language. There were relatively little moments of physical contact. Usually it was language that functioned as a means of seduction, lubrication, contact, which was also an effect of the translation – as if the words had fingers." Yet, even if the language had

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in a way stronger than usual between relatives."] Unfortunately, when contacted by me, Stefan Merki could not remember in detail how he played these moments.

[230] See, among others Tomerius' impression that in Arden reminiscences of gay drag shows are substituted by a "*poetisch amüsanten Reiz. [...] Die Verwirrungen, die Liebe anrichtet, bekommen einen handfesten Zauber, eine komische übergeschlechtliche Anmut, einen zarten ironischen Witz*." […poetically amusing charm. […] The confusions brought about by love receive a basic magic, a comically transgendered grace, a tender ironic humour] Tomerius' impression is indicative of those views that received the play in Arden as more intellectually stimulating than erotically challenging.

[231] "[Maertens] manages as a woman dressed in men's clothes to act a game of love with Orlando, in which no longer the voice of nature comes through, but a man-to-man relation gets palpable," as if same-sex erotic attraction would not follow natural drives. Clearly, here, the non-mimetic erotics allowed to accept what would be otherwise hardly conceivable. Clifford Williams would have been happy with such a reception.

this almost tactile erotic capacity (very much in the vein of Greenblatt's ideas on the role of language in Shakespearean comedies) it was received as a rather virtual tactility. In its focus on language as the locus of feeling, the production indeed generated a firework of conceits and witty arguments, but it alienated spectators from its emotional side. Brasch's language turned emotions into sparkling metaphors,[233] and the expression of emotions took on an artificial, highly aestheticised life of its own. Together with the non-mimetic effect of all-male casting and the exaggerations of burlesque acting, the language conferred on the erotic atmosphere of the play a formal artificiality and alienated more traditional viewers with a realist aesthetics in mind from the production. For the critic Gerhard Ebert such stylised erotics emptied the characters' inner life from what human spectators in their lived reality thought of as profundity of feeling:

> *Männer also spielen Frauen. […] Gewinn ist da keiner. Was bei Shakespeares Weibern ernst gemeint ist, wird von Thalbachs Männern spaßig referiert. Die Herren stellen fortwährend artistisch her, was emotional direkt und elementar durchlebt sein sollte. Das hinreißende oder quälende Wunder der Liebe. […] Rosalinds treuherziger Epilog bleibt Ironie, so sehr sich Michael Maertens Mühe gibt.*[234]

Ebert does not contradict Koetz, Tomerius and others on the erotic potential of this production. What he criticises is that human beings are turned into verbal signs. From a humanist standpoint, the characters are not recognizable on stage as human beings anymore, only as caricatures. Hence, both burlesque as well as verbally stylised erotics

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[232] "We had moments of intimacy, but the effect was not explicitly to produce a homoerotic connotation because it happened in the magical forest within a context where it was difficult to relate it clearly to this or that gender or sex."

[233] One gets the impression that Brasch and Thalbach put their German text back into a tradition associated with the euphemist verbosity of Lyly.

[234] "So it is men playing women. […] Nothing is gained by this. What is meant as serious with Shakespeare's women, is only verbally delivered by Thalbach's men in a funny way. The gentlemen continually produce artificially what should get lived through in an emotionally direct and elementary way: the enchanting and excruciating wonder of love. […] Rosalind's naïve monologue remains a piece of irony, no matter what effort Maertens makes." Of course, one could strongly argue about the monologue's naivety. Nor do I share Ebert's expectations on how to deal with emotions on stage, but within our context this expectation is valid in so far as it makes clear that Thalbach's production did not fulfil its psychologically realist expectations on human empathy.

seem to have denied the experience of a mimetic emotionality in terms of modern notions of identity.

Yet, the non-mimetic aesthetics also problematised the critical potential of this artificial Arden and of the erotics it allowed. In denying a notion of identity endowed with deep emotionality, such aesthetics also denied the characters and the audience an attitude towards emotionality as an inner sphere of authenticity and hence a way of escaping from all too rigid and corrupting social conventions. Instead of such a Romantic, quasi Rousseauean version of utopian authenticity, the production's non-mimetic aesthetics invests in the possibilities of artificiality, its possible sensational thrills. In other words, it is a late modern magic, based on style, which this production constructs. In explicitly foregrounding the basics of eroticism in aesthetic artificiality, Ebert perceived a realist lack in this erotic utopia of gender play, which most critics did not bother about,[235] but which Thalbach, Brasch, and Koetz were acutely aware of, namely the gap between the magic of Arden and the harsh realities of an outside world. According to Koetz, all three concurred on the impossibility to stay in the magic forest and "act on as non-social human beings all the time. We must risk to go back." This going back includes a return not only to a however oppressive social reality, but also to an emotional reality that cannot get sustained by imagination and games of make-belief, be they as ambiguously or poetically seductive as they may be.

Once more, the dilemmas of eroticism in this production are not produced by gender confusion and thwarted sexual object choice, but by the specific way how pleasure and play are used in Arden purportedly to escape the grip of power as

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[235] One explanation might be found in the fact that Ebert was writing for the newspaper *Neues Deutschland*, which was the former official newspaper of the communist party and still counts as the majority of its readers those that believe in the principles of socialism as a social utopia. Given the well-known connection between socialism and aesthetic realism, this would explain why his criticism is implicitly based on principles of a realist aesthetics.

expressed in the court. Such escapism not only makes it difficult to present a convincing return to lived social reality, but also runs the danger of blinding spectators against the way how the wish to play and the need for power intermingle in this magic realm of artificial identities and erotic verbal exchanges.

Koetz recalled that the production team had the clear impression that Touchstone is abusing of Audrey's simplicity, and that Rosalind took on characteristics of a quite rigid and domineering personality in the way how she put Phoebe down as well as in the pleasure she had when demanding Orlando's submission to a game whose rules she alone could set. In other words, the production perceived a powerful narcissistic impulse in these erotic games of make-belief and seduction. Hence, erotic vibrancy in this production is about making palpable a double game: how the desire for imaginative play renders erotically exciting sensations, but at the same time, how such desire is rather unsympathetic with those who are victims of its enthusiasm. Koetz remembers that Celia's presence on stage was crucial to this aspect in the production:

> We tried to tell this element in the story of Celia, who simply falls out of the playtext, it seems, as if Shakespeare forgot to continue her part. She suffers a lot because Rosalind has only eyes for this – in Celia's opinion – stupid nerd Orlando.In our production, she remained onstage, but outside of the square that marked the playground of Arden. So, she was present and visible as that lonely person on whose back this game was played. We saw her function in this sense as similar to the character Jaques, who opens a sphere of sadness and vanity, too. Both remind us of the limited scope which these games have, of the fact that they are destined to end some day. [This day] came when Rosalind realised that Orlando may actually stop playing, give up on his love: "I can no longer live on thinking," and she may lose everything. So, Orlando was not romantically desiring, but deciding out of a feeling of being hurt: "I've had enough!" Brasch consciously foregrounded in his translation the elements that suggested that Orlando knew all the way through that Ganymede was Rosalind playing with him.

In this production, the erotic escape into Arden reproduces the power situations it wants to overcome. Therefore, the couples can hardly learn something out of these games, unless the melancholic insight that all licence is not only bound to end butis also an inverted repetition of power structures under the condition of magic

irresponsibility. Such a notion of frustrated vanity runs, as we have seen, as a red thread through the card-board game.

If the moment of laughter on the seesaw is read as a confession that the whole action on stage is a partly erotic, partly intellectual game, which everybody is aware of, then the fun and success would consist in pretending convincingly not to know what one knows, namely that it is all theatre. What Celia and Orlando, however, make clear (and Rosalind will feel) is that this realm of theatre can take on notions of a prison, a realm of pain and deception instead of pleasure and freedom – the prison of aesthetic stylisation, be it physically or verbally burlesque. In those moments, the production seemed to have tried to criticise its own late modern notions of erotic play as a magic game and possible escape from the oppressive powers of the court. It seems that most critics were too impressed by the burlesque gaiety in Arden and the erotic ambiguity of Rosalind to note the intended political framing of these diverse entertainments, much less did they comment on a relation to contemporary society. Nor did they discuss whether the production, by suggesting a parallel between the forest of Arden and the space of the theatre, implicitly tries to challenge the spectators' interest in play-going and theatrical art. In 4.3.4, I shall analyse in more detail some stage business employed in this production to problematise the impression of Arden as an erotic utopia free of socio-political pressures as ruling in the court; and in relation to the audience, I shall also consider the impression of the theatre as a pleasure dome that truly compensates for the constraints and limitations of lived reality. This necessity of establishing a critical sense of Arden as a space for erotic free play and of theatre going as an activity of entertainment is affirmed by Brasch in an interview with Martin Linzer, in which he expresses the conviction that

> *die einfache Rechnung, wenn der Staat mörderisch ist, die Liebe es uns schon vergelten wird, nicht aufgeht. Daß die Krankheit Staat, die Krankheit Politik,*

> *die Krankheit Einsamkeit in jede Zweisamkeit, in jede Arbeit, in jedes Spiel ihre Säure gießen.*[236]

Brasch's comment harks back on a common understanding of *As You Like It* as a play about love, whose narrative works from disunion to union, and as such "foregrounds the fiction of 'community'", as Penny Gay phrased it in an already mentioned quote. Hence, the play has incited directors to express in the aesthetics of their productions the terms on which their understanding of community is based, and consequently the possibilities or impossibilities of a reconstruction of such community. The next section deals with this political dimension in the production's theatrical aesthetics.

[236] Interview with Martin Linzer, 16 Mar 1993. [the simple calculation that love will compensate us for a murderous state system does not work out. The sickness state, the sickness politics, the sickness loneliness, all pour their acid into any kind of game.] It seems strange that Brasch mentions "the sickness loneliness" within a political context and I wondered for a moment if one should understand this loneliness as referring to alienation, which might well be so since the context of the quote is clearly political. However, his choice of words focuses on the emotional and hence individual side of alienation. But I would argue that an existentialist understanding of loneliness is besides Brasch's point here.

4.3 Socio-political Vibrancy: Negotiating Politics and Entertainment

4.3.1 Clifford Williams' Modernisation of Bourgeois Aesthetics: A Politics of Ascetic Unity

Clifford Williams' all-male production was in fact the National Theatre's second attempt to stage an all-male *As You Like It*. It was originally meant to be directed by John Dexter, in the 1966/67 season, who resigned over differences regarding his approach to the play between him and Sir Laurence Olivier as the leading director. The little that is published concerning these differences merits attention since the stakes contrast significantly with what Williams was willing and permitted to put on stage. Dexter was enthusiastic about directing an all-male production of *As You Like It* after reading Jan Kott's essay about the effect of boy actors on the play's poetic and sexual potential. We do not know whether Dexter saw there a dialectics between both elements or a clear opposition, and if so, which element he intended to foreground on stage. Holden, however, reports that Olivier, after letting Dexter plan the production and even start rehearsals, finally intervened, possibly because he "thought that Dexter was indulging himself in a drag show" (484), a view upheld also by Elsom and Tomalin. The two also report that Dexter wanted a production "which would reflect the new mood of swinging London", which does not really solve the riddle of why Olivier feared Dexter to put on a drag show, since productions with a fair portion of controversial showbiz elements were already a characteristic of the National Theatre's repertoire (Holden, 484). If there were artistic differences, they almost certainly implied different attitudes towards the possible moral and political effects. And this controversy was sure to rise if Dexter really "planned that the love scenes should be 'like Genet – Orlando does believe Rosalind is a boy when he makes a pass at her'"(Lewis, 32), since any sexual act between two men was an imprisonable offence in Britain until 1967, the

year of Williams' production. In that year, the Sexual Offences Act was passed, which legalised homosexual acts between two consenting men in private.[237] Therefore, a massive prejudice concerning the staging of homosexual relations surrounded Dexter's conception of an all-male *As You Like It*. The scandal and argument involving the play *Soldiers* by German dramatist Rolf Hochhuth, which was banned on political grounds from being staged at the National Theatre in 1967, enforce the impression that Sir Laurence Olivier felt homophobia to be the most dangerous threat to the National Theatre's reputation and was more willing to yield to this fear than to any other opposition. In any case, Williams not only distanced his approach from the ideas of Jan Kott and thus the source that inspired John Dexter, but consciously worked towards a version of all-male performances that avoided engaging in subversive sexual politics.

Of course, Olivier's fear of homophobia and his concern with the National Theatre's reputation was not unfounded, as the reaction by Martin Gottfried mentioned earlier reveals. It is safe to say that Williams' production process was surrounded by feelings of sexual anxiety and homophobia, both within the National Theatre and outside in society. On the other hand, there was a considerable openness among representatives of popular culture, especially the music business, to deal rather casually with homoerotic innuendos and transvestite desire.[238] By 1967 women were fighting for more political and sexual freedom. Women's traditional course of destiny, as passive girls who get romantically chosen by men and end up as housewives after marriage, started to become a thing of the past. Nevertheless, the summer of love was still lurking in the future, and so was the hippie-culture who rated up "feminine" men, no matter

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[237] The Act decriminalised only acts between men (lesbianism was not mentioned in the act, it was a largely invisible practice), and then only between two men. Ionescu's final dance on stage would have recalled illegal sexual practices in England.

whether they preferred homo- or heterosexual practices. Gay pride demonstrations were unknown yet, although some gender confusion was already audible on the radio and visible in the streets.[239] It was a time of cultural change and there was enough controversial subject matter around to come up with an erotically and politically charged version of *As You Like It*.

Williams decided against such version. His decision for poetic sexuality and metaphysical purity in love was in line with bourgeois hierarchies concerning the mind-body relation. It did not undermine the idea of substantive identity, although, as a mythical dream, it should be interpreted as expressing some longing for a human existence that transcends the boundaries of bourgeois masculinity and femininity. The fact that Williams did not attempt theatrical vibrancy has its consequences for the relation between the theatrical dream and the socio-political reality. Both remained separated spheres, and the production could neither suggest nor even ask how to make the dream productive within the social world of the spectators. The dream remains the escapist expression of an unattainable ideal love imagined as the ultimate truth about human beings, or as Williams himself put it: "The Forest of Arden […] is the escape we all need. You know, the week-end cottage in the country" (Pearson, *Sunday Times*, 1 Oct 1967). According to Gottfried's version, the escape is restricted to the expression of homosexual identities at the margin of respected society, which deride the heterosexual majority. Even in his somewhat idiosyncratic reading, which sees the production

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[238] Therefore, Marc Wilkinson's counter-tenor makes Martin Gottfried even more sure that the production is meant as homosexual: "[T]he music is pop-rock head music, which unfortunately has come to be associated with such ideas."
[239] See Dana Adams (*The New York Times*, 6 Oct 1967, p.33): "The men playing the women's parts on stage were matched by long-haired boys and short-haired girls among the enthusiastic viewers."

through long passages as a provocative insult to the heterosexual majority of playgoers, there is no blurring of sexual identities nor true overall empathy.[240]

Gottfried's reaction, despite its phobic character, does not give much space for an interpretation of Williams' production as transgressive. Not only because it is an absolute minority view, but most of all because it merely repeats opposites, whereas transgression in the context of gender politics implies the subversion of this opposite thinking. Williams' production does not succeed to show how signs and practices deemed homosexual may have a place within practices so-called heterosexual. Or more radically, Williams' production did not render the distinction between a same-sex or an other-sex love object obsolete when it comes to the value of love. It rather rendered the physical body and the physical relation obsolete.

Judged against the background of received hegemonic notions of heterosexual masculinity and femininity, Williams' production cannot be described as transgressive either. As we have seen, his transcendental understanding of love merely repeats on an abstract level the hierarchic gender system of bourgeois patriarchy. The reason why Williams and his actors did not want to challenge established conceptions of sexuality and gender in *As You Like It* can only be imagined. It might be that they felt that most of the spectators and actors would not take in erotically seductive men on an all-male stage.[241] It might be that they were themselves part of the establishment to such an extent that their utopian impulse led them to follow the established dreams, which seems the most likely for me, since a drive towards poetic masculinity and femininity is

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[240] If in Gottfried's reading the romance in the play humiliates the heterosexual, the production allows her/him revenge by descending into what he calls "cheap laugh-mongering at the expense of the fags." Given the homophobic undertones in his article, this statement appears like condescending bourgeois humanism, which advocates tolerance for the other as long as they stay in their invisible place at the margins.

[241] D.A.N. Jones, who reviewed the production favourably declares at the end of his critique: "But then I last saw Janet Suzman […]: and the great girls of the tradition maintain a hold which most males wouldn't want to exercise on an audience" (*The Listener*, no date available).

in line with the modern utopia of an autonomous subjectivity, not only free of social power but also the power of nature.

Despite the praise for the poetic quality, the traditional slant of the production was noticed by a number of critics like, for example, the *Sunday Telegraph*'s who simply states that the substitution of men by women "does not produce any extraordinary revelations. The courting games retain their playful ambiguity and adolescent gaiety whatever the real sex of the participants" (8 Oct 1967). And Felix Barker reports: "Well, what did we find? A lot of fascinating things. Many effective touches. No false breasts. And, for me, no blazing revelation" (*Evening News*, 4 Oct 1967). And Danny La Rue, the famous female impersonator, commented on this version of transvestite Shakespeare with a simple: "Well, it's very interesting, of course, but I don't see the point of it" (*The Guardian*, 5 Oct 1967). Neither he nor the critics who confessed having been entertained but not impressed did get off on the notion of sublime, angelic love as the core of both play and performance. For even if one holds reservations about female impersonators, such as La Rue, and the subversiveness of the drag shows they stage, it is clear that their point was to tease the audience with erotic innuendos. Moreover, drag shows exposed the audience's own gender prejudices and at least in parts attempted a critical confrontation with these stereotypes. It is significant that even those critics who reacted enthusiastically to the idea of sexless androgyny did not regard the show as a morally or politically provocative statement .

Consequently, this production apparently neglected the question of female empowerment (active courtship) and disempowerment (patriarchal marriage) in the course of action. If the production had taken this question visibly into consideration on stage, Marriott hardly could have drawn on such highly traditional equations as altruist womanhood when praising Pickup's performance as one that takes away all elements of

"selfish hopes." It is also useful to recall that in 1967, arguably, no interpretations were in circulation that foregrounded the question of gender and female empowerment, whereas socially critical interpretations of Arden already existed. If the production did not offer new insights into the thematic structure of the play, this most likely means that it did not deal significantly with the political implications of the courtship scenes. Williams' production was simply not interested in interpretations of the play informed by feminist or socialist positions. It was, as he himself and other critics acknowledge, a succesful attempt to show how all-male casting can update a bourgeois patriarchal interpretation of love and subjectivity in *As You Like It*.

From an aesthetic point of view, this all-male production was certainly an attempt to test the contemporariness of the play and the capacity of the theatre to produce a contemporary language for a traditional bourgeois dream, namely autonomous, self-sufficient subjectivity. Frank Marcus declares that in producing this dream, Williams "succeeded beyond one's wildest expectations and against impossible odds." According to Marcus, Williams did so by producing a "synthetic paradise", where "characters are like glove puppets, cut off below the waist" and love is "an abstract concept." Marcus is very much aware that this "joyous celebration of a state of existence that transcends reality […] questions the humanist tenets of Wells, Orwell, and other prophets of doom", namely those who perceive the scientific progress as a threat to humanity. Williams, according to Marcus' enthusiastic response, "enrols science in the service of pleasure, by using it as a toy, as a conveyance to an ecstatic dream." Now, if Marcus is right – and his interpretation is a compelling one, because it brings the gender experiment and Koltai's futurist setting in line – Williams' production was one step towards late bourgeois subjectivity, for which the meaning and possibilities of human identity became dissociated from nature as an inherent and

restraining context. Instead, the human mind conceives individual identity now as "artificial and insubstantial." The means to that end is science, the goal is independence of the mind from the body and the measuring rod is, as Marcus already knows, the pleasure based on the control of the mind over the limitations of the natural body. In this project, some become actors on stage and focus on prosthetic signs, others will undergo subsequent plastic surgeries.

Within the wider context of cultural politics, it comes to no surprise that the aesthetic of Williams' production, which avoids theatrical, erotic and, as we can say now, socio-political vibrancy, forms an alliance with the cultural establishment. The production has been called "a dream in which there [is] no reality" (Rosenfeld qtd. in Kennedy, 257) or has been said to yield a "dream-like total experience" (Kennedy, 257). The dream it dreams up is a disassociation of human beings from their bodies, so that a lofty poetics can pretend to heal all wounds inflicted by physical, psychic and social pressures, as if in the realm of poetry the question of power and marginalisation no longer existed.[242] This depoliticised poetic utopia can easily be accused of hiding a good deal of hypocrisy, since these social and psychic contexts still exert a formative power on poetic imagery by way of what it purportedly excluded. In its utopian dream of love as the expression of a spiritual ascension that transcends question of gender, sexuality and class, the production voiced a note of non-confidence in real love relations in the

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[242] The suppressed class-bias becomes even more clear, if one knows that the play's Arden was meant to be set in an atmosphere that mixes "a full psychedelic scene" with a "Roman type dolce vita background" (Pearson, *The Sunday Times*, 1 Oct 1967). In other words, in the journey from court to Arden upper middle class youngsters run away from the social and economic regulations of affluent macho society to the realm of inner (understood as mental) freedom. With this piece of information and the traditional gender conception in mind, one can understand Buzz Goodbody's intention to re-write Williams' production (see Gay, 'As She Likes It'). She does so through a similar architectural design, but brings into the open the silent gender and class assumptions in Williams' production. For her, the play is explicitly about the world and encounters of art students and about gender as a marker of political power. Goodbody did not succeed with the critics, although the audience liked the production. But she clearly perceived Williams' patriarchal preconceptions when she conceived her *As You Like It* as a contribution to anti-patriarchal sexual politics.

lived reality of directors, actors, and audience, but it also directed this frustration towards a familiar poetic ideal of harmonious relationship. Against the frustration with the modern ideal of fixed gender cores, i.e., of substantive identity, it set the even less attainable ideal of poetic, asexual and insubstantial subjectivity as ultimate truth. One can acknowledge that the production did not attempt to bridge the gap between dream and lived reality for the audience. But in so far as it produced this dream as ideal, it also incited a longing. Given the unattainability of this ideal, what else can such longing produce but cynicism, resignation or neurotic emotionality? I guess that Marcus was right to focus the message of the production not on the conception of love, but of non-substantive identity. The formal language of the production, especially through the architectural set, tapped into the socio-economic dream that technology could purify social relations and human beings and make them feel at home in such a well-ordered, artificial and aesthetically self-referential world. In 1967, this was not a transgressive, but a progressive idea. In carrying out this project, Williams' production was not accused of being unfaithful to the playtext, but on the contrary perceived as a hitherto unknown realisation of traditional bourgeois assumptions on the play. It took traditional bourgeois identity into the realm where it belonged to from its most inner desire: the virtuality of non-substantive identity. Hence, we could call Williams' production a hyper-bourgeois one. In this desire for purity and perfection, it can get aligned with high modernist aesthetics and theatrical concepts like Gordon Craig's. It voices a dissatisfaction in bourgeois subjects with their own cultural context, but also an unwillingness to make this frustration productive and wrest a transformative impulse out of this desire. Rather, the production proposes a utopian, unattainable dream shut off from everyday routine.

4.3.2. Petrica Ionescu's Destruction of Modern Bourgeois Aesthetics: A Politics of Libidinal Disunity

Petrica Ionescu's shock treatment of the playtext, his anti-bourgeois destruction of humanist assumptions on love and masculinity can best be seen within a movement in West German theatre to destroy the classical heritage. This impulse goes back to the early 1960s and the student protests which, in the German case, denounced a deep-running continuity between pre-fascist humanism and post-World War II bourgeois culture, namely the triad of Capitalism, Christianity and Classicist Culture. Despite its historically motivated urgency, the anti-classical impetus was not a specifically German characteristic. Hortmann notes that

> the impulse to wrench the classics from their moorings was not only a German phenomenon; vide the adaptations and re-castings of Joseph Papp, Eugène Ionesco, Charles Marowitz, Edward Bond and Tom Stoppard. These radical transvaluations that Shakespeare was subjected to in the 1960s and 1970s reflected the progressive schizoidism in the world view of Western man [sic], to which the theatre reacted with categories of absurdity, irrationality and fragmentation. (225)

In face of what was seen as the grotesque absurdity of bourgeois capitalist Western society, this anti-traditional movement was simultaneously anti-bourgeois. It intended to dismantle "the classical heritage as the traditional locus and confirmation of metaphysically meaningful existence" (Hortmann, 275) and to

> relieve the classics from the conventional constraint towards affirmation. To recoup their original explosive power and make them reveal their inner material contradictions they would have to be inserted into a radically contemporary context: politicising, (psycho-) analysing, and even brutalising them, if necessary. (Hortmann, 228)

Hortmann calls this anti-humanist, anti-bourgeois theatre iconoclastic since it debunks the basic signs elements (or icons) of theatrical bourgeois convention and communication: a theatrical mimesis based on notions of *person, character, plot, space* as identifiable and meaningful, i.e., coherent signs. His description of specific theatrical means to undermine such notions reads like a description of Ionescu's production,

whose technique he explicitly relates to Zadek, according to him the most gifted iconoclast and theatrical *agent provocateur* on the German stage in the 1970s. As Hortmann puts it, avant-garde directors

> yok(ed) together heterogeneous elements, freely crossing the border to the subconscious, the irrational and surreal, replacing the normative manner of production with a disjunctive and even disruptive one. In the process of this deconstruction they broke many taboos of morality and taste and committed constant sacrileges against the spirit, the letter and the traditional "iconic" reception of the original. Their radicalism had many faces. It was uniform neither in ideological impetus nor in manner of presentation. Nor were their drastic disruptions of theatrical convention primarily acts of wilful effrontery, as traditionalists surmised, but efforts to sharpen the public's awareness of the profound disturbance of our cultural condition. (275)

Ionescu's production shows almost all of these characteristics. The director's understanding of Shakespeare as a psychotherapist points at an assumption that the bourgeois mind and emotionality are profoundly disturbed. The grotesque, stereotyping acting style participates in the interest in subconscious contents of the psyche as well as the normative effect of social forces. The impression of dramatic performance as a happening marked the production as disjunctive and, given the final dance, even disruptive. Ionescu's intention apparently was to bring the repressed erotic contents of the bourgeois psyche on stage. His production is probably the one that most decidedly wanted to break with its hegemonic cultural context and use the abjected elements in the psyche to trouble and undermine the conventionally accepted ones.

Yet, if he intended a sharpening of the public's awareness regarding their own cultural condition, he utterly failed. His supposedly "enlightening" or "therapeutic" provocation was flatly rejected, or not perceived as a provocation at all, namely by those who were already converted. The initial image, in which Touchstone showed the audience waiting for the show his bare posterior, is a good case in point.[243] The director simply cherished the idea of adolescent provocation and the bourgeois audience

received it as a mere insult. This reaction is quite understandable, but if we rethink the beginning with the epilogue in mind, it is clear that Konarek's posterior could be read also as an invitation. Consequently, the gay audience loved it as a splendid joke.[244] This initial image shows that on stage the real performance was not a traditional version of *As You Like It*, but one about neurosis and liberation of bourgeois masculinity, using *As You Like It* as the means to convey such notions. The grotesque, non-mimetic performance style, the redefinition of Arden as a cold, run-down slaughterhouse produced a hermetic stage world that countered all traditional expectations on the play and the characters' identity.[245] The final scene slightly eased the claustrophobic characteristics of the production, but its specific, openly homoerotic way of doing so equally ran against bourgeois audience expectations.

The strength of these expectations can be inferred from some critics who were appalled and flabbergasted by the break with theatrical conventions. The *Buersche Zeitung*, a small local newspaper published in Gelsenkirchen, describes the production as a reversal of traditional notions :

> *Shakespeare's Komödie "Wie es euch gefällt" galt bisher als ein "musikdurchwobenes" und von leiser Schwermut "beschattetes" Meisterwerk. […] Diese Attribute scheinen Bochums Theatergewaltigen nicht ins Konzept zu passen. Sie machen aus der Anmut hässliche Fratzen, aus der Schwermut bitterbösen Haß, aus komödiantischem Spiel eine vielfach drückende Anhäufung von Horrorszenen und nicht zu überbietenden sexuellen Geschmacklosigkeiten. […] Zuschauer waren*

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[243] Konarek, 12.05.04.
[244] Konarek, 12.05.04.
[245] May be, one reason for Ionescu's failure was that he apparently did not find a clear and genuine theatrical interest in the play, different from Katharina Thalbach, for example, who embedded her discussion of sexuality with the tradition of burlesque theatre. Clifford Williams, too, drew on the tradition of poetic drama to create a consistent theatrical atmosphere. These considerations are admittedly rather speculative, but Konarek, Eggenhofer, and Koch they all affirm that from their point of view, Ionescu had no clear *theatrical* concept as concerns the possibilities and intentions of the all-male cast. And, as I would add, if Shakespeare was understood as a psychotherapist, Ionescu's production at least lacked a decisive quality in members of this profession, namely to remain silent and listen to the emotional trifles of their patients. Instead of creating emotional predicaments, it simply denounced neuroses.

> *enttäuscht, empört, verletzt und überdies – gelangweilt, da sie den tieferen Sinn dieser „Exzesse“ nicht verstanden* (25 May 1976).[246]

And the critic further ruled in a peculiarly detached mode (given the negative slant of the opening lines of the critique above):

> *Dieses Publikum scheint nicht gewillt, solche Herausforderungen geduldig hinzunehmen. […] Die Inszenierung von Petrica Ionescu ist für weitere Aufführungen in Gelsenkirchen kaum geeignet. […] Wie das ohne Zweifel Experimenten gegenüber aufgeschlossenere Bochumer Publikum auf diese* ***ungebärdige*** *und* ***vitale*** *Inszenierung reagiert, bleibt abzuwarten [emphasis mine].*[247]

In the same vein, Hans-Jörg Loskill declares, the production "*hat der Poesie den Garaus gemacht*"[248], and he concludes that Touchstone's bare posterior sums up the production's attitude towards the audience. He accuses the director of having brought out a "*krude, verfälschte, Shakespeare verächtlich machende Produktion*" (*Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 May 1976).[249] For Loskill, the most pertinent characteristics of the production were lack of taste and ignorance.

In fact, reception did not differ much between Bochum and Gelsenkirchen. Konarek recalls how, during the intervall, enraged audience members knocked with their fists against the windows of the actors' canteen, and Knut Koch mentions in his letter to the editor of the *Ruhr-Nachrichten* how "*in Bochum erstarrt das Publikum, sobald Männer ernstlich nicht nur "Männer" sind, in Bochum zischt das Publikum*

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[246] Until now, Shakespeare's comedy was perceived as a masterpiece permeated by music and slight melancholy. […] Those in charge of the Bochum Theatre don't seem to accept these attributes for their concept. They turn charm into ugly grimaces, melancholy into spiteful hate, comedian play scenes into a frequently depressing accumulation of horror scenes and sexual tasteless moments that can hardly get topped. […] Spectators were disappointed, enraged, hurt and moreover bored, since they did not understand the deeper meaning of what they perceived as "excesses" on stage.

[247] This audience does not seem willing to accept patiently such challenges. […] Petrica Ionescu's production is hardly suitable to get performed in Gelsenkirchen again. It is a production that radically breaks with theatrical conventions. […] It remains to be seen how the doubtlessly more open Bochum audience will react to this **boisterous** and **vital** production (emphasis mine).

[248] It "slaughtered the poetry".

[249] A "crude and falsified production that despises Shakespeare"

Applaus nieder, in Bochum schreit ein weißhaariger Herr die Schauspieler an: 'Ihr Schweine…!'" (12 June 1976).[250]

Hence, the reactions to the production can be summed up as accusing it either of falsifying Shakespeare or of promoting moral perversion, or both. One can deduce from these two judgements a) the production's anti-humanist attitude and b) its homoerotic celebration of liberated sexuality. They also point to the director's insecurity in regard to what to do with the implications of the all-male cast in terms of gender politics: to foreground masculinity as a power-ridden attitude, hence grotesque and puppet-like, or masculinity as an inherently polymorphous sexuality, hence blurring the lines between hetero- and homosexuality, but not necessarily turning characters into puppets.[251] We can assume that the production did not come up with an aesthetically coherent discussion of non-bourgeois masculinity, but presented two conceptions of masculinity – the power-ridden and the polymorphous one – to undermine and overcome a forcefully unified bourgeois masculinity. The two concomitant theatrical strategies were accused of being unfaithful to the playtext and its spirit, and this accusation deserves some discussion, since it allows us to understand how the production negotiated politics and entertainment through its imagery.

Of course, the claim for fidelity to "Shakespeare" is a specious one, for it usually comes down to the kind of "Shakespeare" the speaker of the affirmation has in mind. The valid point in this discussion, however, is to demand that a dramatic production sharpens and enriches the audience's awareness of its cultural situation and/or of the

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[250] "In Bochum the audience freezes as soon as men are de facto not only "men"; in Bochum the audience hisses down humour and applause; in Bochum, a white-haired gentleman calls the actors: 'You pigs…!'"
[251] All interviewed actors claim that Ionescu did not clarify his vision of the play's gender politics. The ambiguity between grotesquely deviant and psychologically deviant subjectivity was never worked or thought through during rehearsals. And it is probable that this uncertainty is responsible for what Hortmann calls the production's lack of "intellectual and emotional refinement" (Letter to the author, 28.10.03).

complexity of the playtext and of "Shakespeare" as a received cultural heritage. None of these goals seems to have been achieved.

The reason for this failure lies not only in a purported parochial narrow-mindedness of the Bochum and Gelsenkirchen audience. Nor did it necessarily lie in the kind of ideological subtext that Ionescu's production employed: linking bourgeois masculinity and concepts of love with a lust for power, and basing liberated masculinity/sexuality on a capacity to overcome homophobic/patriarchal attitudes. The awareness of love as shot through with power impulses and the proposal to understand marriage as a problematic dialogue instead of harmonising unification and oppression can indeed be seen as an element of the playtext, although not of its traditional bourgeois reception.

If the production's problem was not that its subtext cannot get rooted, as Clifford Williams demands, in the playtext, the real problem was that it did not dialogue this subtext with the traditional interpretation of the play and the other layers of meaning in the playtext. The production did not find a visual and theatrical language to make its reading of love as reduced to a grotesque realisation of power instincts convincing as a dramatic rendering of the playtext. In terms of Stallybrass's and White's understanding of transgression, this production did not show how the culturally low, the grotesque and mechanic aspects of human behaviour, are contained in and related to a traditional understanding of the playtext as part of high bourgeois culture. It presented a confrontative, instead of a deconstructive provocation. In this schematic approach, the production structurally mirrors many traditional, harmonising interpretations that suppress all elements of discoursive contradiction, i.e., potentially disruptive dialogue. The scarce material on the production indicates, that Ionescu did not create a poly-semantic production text (as did his patron, Peter Zadek, in his renderings of, for

example, *Hamlet* or *Othello*) The analytical message existed mainly outside the playtext and the production's context of reception. Ionescu found no theatrical way to link his reading convincingly to these two contexts. Hence, his interpretational assumptions about Shakespeare's text as therapeutic to a one-sided masculinity were received as a rather exterior affirmation, instead of a viable reading of the playtext.[252]

The issues of sexual politics and the treatment of homoerotic impulses in masculinity fit into this scheme, although they receive a final treatment that allows for some differentiation. Both issues center around the figure of Rosalind. The production starts with a fairly traditional presentation of her femininity. Both she and Celia wear beautiful Renaissance-style dresses at court (see appendix J and L). Hence, the production visually lures the spectator into an identification with Rosalind as conventionally female. This convention and the concomitant identification then get dissolved in the cross-dressed Ganymede. But the tactics of provocation is different from the critique of bourgeois identity in Arden. Instead of promoting a repressed other right from the start, the gender subversion worked by first building up a bourgeois context which then reveals its lack of foundation. The bourgeois gaze is first tentatively affirmed, only to get undermined later. This tactics at least attempted to queer certain dramatic moments in the narrative. Such intention becomes clear in the aforementioned final scene with the Viennese waltz, which retains this scene's celebratory atmosphere and harmonious unification, but to totally non-traditional ends. In doing so, the

[252] With hindsight, this gap between theatrical approach and received meaning of the playtext is actually a vanguardist feature of Ionescu's production. If we think of directors and theatre makers as different as Robert Wilson, Robert LePage, and Heiner Müller, productions are no longer expected to dramatise a playtext's meaning. They simply function as material for the directorial approach to test and convey certain atmospheres and kinds of experiences concerning time, (local and social) space as well as subjectivity and identity. Unfortunately, Pater Zadek as director of the Schauspielhaus Bochum has intorudced a strictly commercial politics to the theatre. Those productions that did not sell well, quickly got cut. Ionescu's production shared this fate.

production overcomes its own strictly anti-bourgeois politics and points forward to critical strategies employed in the 1990s.

4.3.3 Declan Donnellan's Postmodern Queering of Bourgeois Aesthetics: A Politics of Metatheatrical Make-belief

If Williams' transcendental concept of love and masculinity works as to hide its conservative political implications behind a veil of spiritual purity and if Ionescu's libidinal impulse mainly attempts to destroy received masculinity and its political oppressive expressions, Declan Donnellan's metatheatrical approach to gender and power impulses neither hides the problem of unequal distribution of social power, nor does it deny the lovers a meaningful and pleasureable existence within this patriarchal power structure. What's more, an analysis of the marriage scene and its political implications reveals that the production apparently believes in the possibility that personal, erotic experiences can have a limited, but still transformative political effect.

In all productions, the marriage scene signifies a transformation of private relations into political units. In this sense, the scene sketches a utopian look onto a future society or deliberately denies such positive horizon. Erickson has revealed to what extent the marriage scene in the playtext can be seen as infused with the restoration of patriarchal power. Even if he denies the possibility to undermine this restoration from a position within the playtext, a production in its own right may stage a scene in such a way that it undermines the validity and scope of patriarchal power. In this vein, Donnellan stages a festive encounter of fictitious cross-sex and same-sex commitments.

Moreover, Donnellan consciously foregrounds same-sex bonding in the final scene, [253] not only by allowing Rosalind and Celia to dance together (see appendix Q) but also by paring up Jaques with the actor who plays Hymen and before has played Amiens. Yu Jin Ko describes the scene in the 1994 production on stage on Oct 4-9 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York: "Jaques (Michael Gardiner), who had been cast as a homosexual who was only tentatively out, was brought back after his final departure to tango (literally) with Hymen in a final orgiastic dance of sexual abandon" (17). Donnellan himself justified this interpolation of stage business, since for him simply pairing up the four couples smacked too much of an installation of the bourgeois nuclear family, "and nuclear families have been capitalised into some repressive idea of basic virtue. It seemed only morally decent to put Jaques there to raise some questions" (quoted in Solomon, 25). If we also consider the prominent moments in which Celia dances with Rosalind, as well as the camp atmosphere between Silvius and Phoebe[254] and Touchstone and Audrey,[255] respectively, then we can conclude that Donnellan does not want the marriage scene to be a defence of a whatever reformed bourgeois social model, but a proposal to rethink and reframe such model. By making marriage a less heterosexual and less rigid love relation, Donnellan not only claims for equal human value in cross-sex relationships and same-sex relationships; he also manifests, through the dance in which all couples exchange their partners, that Jaques' critique, though a pertinent warning, does not apply in putting one love over the

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[253] In the final tango, the couples exchange their dance partners to the effect that Celia and Rosalind get some prominent moments in it. The production worked against the impression that heterosexual marriage excludes by necessity other erotically charged friendships.

[254] Jonathan Bate believes that the cross-dressed Phoebe is decidedly a drag figure and, thus, part of a homosexual aesthetics (7). Ko, too, detects the tendency to present Phoebe as a stereotyped figure in this production, whose funny impact depends on that stereotyped appearance. Hence, it displays a moment of misogyny (17).

[255] Ko sees her played as an "innocent country slut […] with long, shapely legs that she was fond of displaying." In conjunction with this perception of Audrey as object of an (internalised) male desire, Bate describes his impression of Audrey as "bimboish" and full of "affectionate exuberance" (7).

other.[256] The fact that he is succesfully wooed back into the scene cuts the sharp edge of his prophecy. The production assigns those couples that are closer in style to a homosexual romp the same value as it does to the more refined Orlando and Rosalind.

It is not only the open defence of homoerotic bonding that puts this production in a strained position in regard to modern models of identity and society. The choreography of the marriage scene also makes clear that paternal and patriarchal power are weakened and no longer manage to assign fixed, separate social and sexual roles to man and woman. The undermining of traditional paternal authority is first staged through a reversal of adressees by Rosalind. Different from the Folio version, in which she acknowledges her father as master and then Orlando, here she first turns to Orlando to offer herself, manifesting independence from her father's will. Orlando, in turn, recoils – if out of disappointment or hurt feelings is up to the audience to decide. Rosalind then loses her strength and throws herself into her father's arms. This gives Orlando the chance to reconsider his doubt, accept his love and claim her back instead of simply accepting herself out of the arms of her father. In doing so, they can meet (and physically do at centre stage) freely as partners who have actually chosen each other. It is important that Orlando not only chooses this Rosalind, but, in his reconsidering, accepts the play of make-belief in the forest as an important contribution to their relationship. It is of secondary importance whether he feels ashamed that his Rosalind knows about his (possible) same-sex desires to Ganymede, or whether he feels hurt by realising that Rosalind was playing tricks on him just as the Rosalind described by Ganymede would do. What counts is the fact that by returning to Rosalind he accepts both possibilities as part of their life as a couple. In other words, he neither limits himself to a onesided bourgeois masculinity nor does he pin Rosalind down to a

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[256] Consequently, he cut from his production Hymen's lines V.4.124-139, in which Hymen confers on

traditional femininity. To recoil and to return, in my reading, is to take marriage beyond the structural pattern of traditional bourgeois practices.[257] That this new collaborative basis allows for unprecedented political acts is shown when Duke Senior confers on Orlando a decoration. Orlando accepts the medal, but in turn hands it over to Rosalind.

Such stage business is widely read as a transfer of patriarchal power, justified since Rosalind's knowledge about reality, affirmed in the fictitious context of make-belief, gives her the authority to receive the medal – and through it, symbolically, the creative and nurturing authority of patriarchal power. In this sense, not only Orlando (through becoming both plightful lover and courageous lion killer throughout the dramatic narrative) but also Rosalind acquires a kind of androgynous quality. If this were the final moment of their relationship on stage, it would certainly raise some questions and present a rather unconvincing resolution of their love play, especially as regards Orlando. Yet, the subsequent tango allows Orlando to claim and affirm an active position, too. It also introduces a dynamic moment in the possible interpretation of both characters as androgynous, making clear that one cannot remain balanced between feminine and masculine qualities, nor unite both qualities in oneself in one determinate moment. The gender utopia becomes one of subsequently assuming male and female gendered qualities, alternating in one's behaviour from one gender to the other.

Given the fact that a marriage on stage is never simply a private affair, the production constructs a parallel between this private utopia and the gender politics in the public realm: power positions in public affairs are no longer assigned according to

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each couple a distinct fate.

[257] Most of the critics believe that this scene puts some doubt on the longevity of the relation. I would argue the opposite. In the forest, Orlando turned from naïve lover to a kind of victimised beloved. Now, he leaves Rosalind's dominance and becomes a collaborator, capable of assuming both active and passive, close and distant position in relation to her.

the sex of the public actor. In this sense, the duke's comment on this dance ("Proceed! Proceed! We will begin these rites,/ As we do trust they'll end, in true delights." V.4.196-7) signifies his submission to Orlando's and Rosalind's gender politics. Their gender negotiations get political approval and, at least as a vision, political impact.

Furthermore, to give his erotic utopia a political edge, Donnellan's production intriguingly exploits the parallels between Orlando's relation to Ganymede and the spectator's relation to the actors on stage. Both relations depend on the readiness to take the presented subjects as if they were what they pretend to be. The already mentioned deception in Orlando before the wedding recalls Jaques' shock in the 1991 production when feeling Ganymede's breast: suddenly "being" threatens the pleasures of "seeming". Orlando's and Rosalind's accomplishment, however, lies in their ability to negotiate these two levels so that "seeming" can enrich "being." As explained in chapter 3, the epilogue can be understood as a challenge for the audience to do much the same with what they have seen on stage. The theatrical experience may enrich lived experience.

In Cheek by Jowl's production, the epilogue is marked as a sudden change on the level of the fiction. The couples are still engaged in the final dance, when the music suddenly stops and all stand as they are, with Orlando holding Rosalind embraced down stage left. Lester then leaves Orlando's arm, steps forward and delivers the lines in a completely undramatic, natural style. Thus, he manages to convey at least part of the ambiguous meanings of the lines to his audience, judging by the audience's laughter when he charges women to like as much of the play as pleases them. The naturalness of his voice and the smooth, quick change between marriage rites and epilogue ensure that the atmosphere of the dance is still there – and hence a positive energy for Rosalind's conjuring. Before starting with the lines "if I were a woman", Lester takes off his

earrings and hair ribbon, which reveals his short cut hair and his ears. The figure on stage is clearly a man, which comes not as a shock, but as a kind of déjà vu, as if to state that a) theatrical fiction now comes to an end, and b) the gender of the actor (or character) is or should be ultimately unimportant. By framing the gender of the actor to such an effect, the production finally uses the all-male casting and the concomitant gender vibrancy for a surprising defence of an inner human sphere against the intrusion of politically produced gender categories, as Donnellan recalls in an interview with Dominic Cavendish in the *Independent* (4 Jan 1995):

> "It's odd that highlighting the gender leads you quite quickly to one of the most moving lines of the play, when Ganymede promises to set Rosalind before Orlando 'human as she is'. […] In the terrible world we have built, we are so conscious of our differences, and here is this line reminding you that what really matters is a human being."

So, in the end, the real transgression proposed by Donnellan's all-male production is to remain conscious of socio-political frames, but also to maintain open (I am talking about love relationships) a sensitivity for an inner realm where socio-political markers matter less than our common emotional human nature. Taken against the final stage business of the show, this does by no means imply a proposal of the general unimportance of social identity markers. Donnellan's political usage of the erotic and amorous capacities in staging the marriage with an all-male cast insists on the power of a human sphere free of political inscription, because from there human beings can criticise and subvert fixed political positions, and get them moving. The transgression of fixed gender opposites leads to a need to dislocate social power positions. Both Rosalind and Orlando overcome the necessity to construct fixed identity along lines of gender and class, and in doing so they construct an "expanded" sensitivity (see 4.1.3) that all human beings share a common frailty, emotionality, and desire for free play that need to get mediated with the necessities of social reality. The utopian

horizon in this *As You Like It* is not to transform the political sphere so that patriarchal power may disappear, but to empower the individual subject so that patriarchal power becomes nothing else but one cultural frame among others against which individuals can affirm a relative freedom. In doing so, they not only dislocate the conditions of social power but also – under the constraining existence of social power – use this dislocation as a relative freedom to keep their personal love alive and their personal pleasures in motion.

Comparing this interpretation to Adrian Noble's mixed cast production, we can see the differences in their political proposal. As pointed out in 2.2.1, Noble's version remains trapped in the dichotomy between fictious world and lived reality, since using actors whose sex conforms to the characters', it falls into a mimetic aesthetics that cannot bridge in its utopian gesture the gap between its power-free ideal and the power-ridden lived reality outside the theatrical space. Noble's version empowers the female characters throughout Arden; i.e., it reveals a liberal feminist impetus. But it cannot mediate between this impetus and the androgynous utopia it also constructs for Rosalind and Orlando in Arden. The reason seems to lie in its lack of distance to its own utopian proposals. In its mimetic aesthetics, it takes androgynous gender identity too seriously, and even the chosen archetypal way out is no political solution, but an aesthetically attractive form of resignation and maintenance of the unbridgeable gap. At best, one can understand the idea of archetypal completeness in the tradition of modern, humanist readings as the end of a journey towards self-discovery and the realisation of this androgyny as one's inner essence. But suddenly, there is no place conceivable within society for such a completeness.

Donnellan, in his non-illusionist understanding of all-male casting, obviously does not share this modern tradition. For him, gender is performative as in the already

mentioned scene with the apron, and no inner completeness can get achieved, because no inner gender essence exists in his production. In contrast to the modern essentialist utopia, the non-illusionist aesthetics of Donnellan's show understands social markers not as a prison for an alienated human essence, but as the arena where human performance is acted out and whose social markers are to be used. But the question is to what objective one uses these social signs. Donnellan's show exposes a gender utopia in which human beings are able to make full use of all signs available, make them circulate in order to get rid of the limiting idea of essence. In this sense, ultimately, his production expresses not a specific gender utopia, but a semiotic utopia, a utopian approach to identity markers (whatever these may be in specific cases). The more one achieves such freedom from the oppressive authority of conventionalised identity markers, the better one can play the play of make-belief in love. And the function of imaginative entertainment in Donnellan's theatre is exactly the lure for the spectators to let their anaesthetic, fairly fixed world get modified by this non-sentimental, mind expanding theatre, as Donnellan himself expresses it in his interview with Berry: "The central moment of theatre is when the audience's imagination and the actor's imagination are perfectly joined, and something is born between them. It's not like a pornographic vaudeville in which something unobtainable is displayed" (202).

4.3.4 Katharina Thalbach's Late Modern Aesthetics: A Politics of Burlesque Escapism

As pointed out in 4.2.4 concerning the treatment of erotic vibrancy, Katharina Thalbach's production adopted a sceptical attitude in regard to the wish to use erotic licence as a release from the dynamics of power inherent in social oppression. Given the awareness of some rather ruthless features in the desire to play the game of make-belief

in Arden, as well as the melancholic conclusions from the restless volatility of desire, it becomes clear that this performance of *As You Like It* intended to deny Arden an unproblematic utopian quality, despite the playful release of both comic and erotic energies.

Nevertheless, director and dramaturg conceived Arden in the first place as a liberating sphere, a realm in opposition to the rigid system of social regulations. Koetz recollects this attitude and some effects on the production's staging:

> It was important for us to start from the insight that they run away from a court that represents an unjust system based on oppression. In this context, we tried to make visible the freedom that could be found in the play in Arden; that means the forest was, for us, a magical forest, a forest of transformations, […] the scenery was a perfect solution, since the playful atmosphere in the forest could get achieved with the simpliest means. The stage in act 1 had almost no profundity, so that only when the backwall turned backwards to become part of the forest ground, the place for play was prepared. […] In this sense, it was clear from the beginning that this playing around with gender in Arden, as well as the idea of play as such, functioned as a kind of escape from a system that stood for insensitive power, strict regulations.

In other words, from this point of view, Thalbach's production was based on a quite traditional concept. In its basic assumptions, it can easily be compared to, for example, Romantic and Victorian notions of Arden as the perfect place for a holiday from society's tedious conventions and repressive hierarchy. The hope that the aesthetic experience or even existence could offer a chance to avoid the limiting predicaments of a life embedded in the social hierarchies is part of modern utopian bourgeois thought. In this sense, Thalbach merely gave modern attitudes a late modern visual language and theatrical register, since in mixing the burlesque and the poetic with the de-naturalising effects of the all-male cast, she framed Arden with an aesthetic artificiality that, in turn, is the basis for theatrical wonders and the production's entertaining effect. In doing so, she produced the impression of Arden as a contemporary, openly aesthetic, *locus*

amoenus. Gerhard Ebert spells out this contemporariness as a parallelism between stylised behaviour in lived reality and on stage.

> *Weil heutzutage angeblich ohnehin kein Mensch mehr an die Liebe als ein ehrliches und elementares Gefühl glaubt, entspricht der Regisseurin Sicht allerdings dem sogenannten Zeitgeist*.[258]

However, Arden's status as a separate realm of liberty expressed through all kinds of surreal stage business, partly poetically sublime and partly ridiculously artificial (see 4.1.4), is undercut by the production's decision to deride the court and its aggressive masculinity through the same burlesque technique that characterises also the life in Arden. When Charles ostentatiously exposes a ridiculously blown up artificial penis, Orlando gets the upper hand of him by squeezing it hard. Duke Frederick "plays with dolls and looks as if sprung out of the Addams Family. He is surrounded by dumb courtiers" (see Göpfert). Dictatorship in Arden is first of all funny, and only secondly brutal and menacing. The atmosphere of burlesque fun-making at the court makes it difficult to read the quasi sadistic lust in acting out aggressive impulses in a serious way. Oliver's interrogation is played more like a torture scene than an official inquiry,[259] but since Duke Frederick is hardly a realist figure, his brutality becomes equally unreal. Burlesque denaturalisation permeates both Arden and court, and blurs the dichotomy between them. Although Koetz stressed the importance of the horrifying political situation for the conception of Arden as a realm of liberation, the critique did focus more on the similarities in style. From their point of view, the production clearly advanced as its aesthetic context a late modern one in which love, horror and political oppression are hardly more than grotesque signifiers that refer to a distant signified called love, horror, or political oppression, but not to social realities. Within the overall

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[258] [Anyway, since nowadays it is said that nobody believes in love as an honest and elementary emotion anymore, the director's point of view corresponds with the so-called *Zeitgeist*].

aesthetics of the production a world of images threatened to become more important than the emotions and human experience they refered to.

Yet, Koetz, Thalbach and Brasch did not simply want to present a play that self-complacently indulges in its own theatrical wit, even if many critics surmised exactly this intention.[260] In their conception of the production, they were critical of this idea that love and erotic play could be a feasible escape from the realm of social oppression. Brasch's conviction (see 4.2.4) that a corrupt state pours acid in all supposedly private expressions of being is exemplary of the production's stance on the kind of emotional and aesthetic escapism that the performance itself foregrounds. One can locate the show's socio-political intention in this problematisation of its own premise and utopian desire, namely to develop Arden as a world of free-play. And Thalbach's apparent intention to problematise the liberating promise entailed in this aesthetic Arden can be read as an indirect problematisation of her theatrical art and the audience's reception of it.

There is one element of stage business that could have led critics to understand this auto-critical impulse in the production: the use of Katharina Thalbach's own voice off-stage. She appeared aurally on stage in two moments which together form a crucial link, if one wants to evaluate the production's problematisation of the magic forest as a kind of *officially* licenced amusement park. Thalbach's voice can be heard through the speakers the first time in English, when Rosalind asks Orlando what time it is. Thalbach had recorded the famous "there is no clock in the forest" response in English, and the sentence repeated many times sounded similar to the automatic voice that tells the time on the telephone. Hence, the separation of this "natural" Arden from the social world of

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[259] The tendency to explore the court in its full brutality goes back at least to Michael Elliot's production in 1961 (see Marshall, 76).
[260] See Göpfert, Detje, Ebert, among others.

the court was announced and thus legitimised by some abstract authority that had its roots nevertheless in the civilised world of technology – and by the end of the performance in the institution of marriage. And Thalbach appeared again, in the role of Hymen, confirming the suspicion that her off-stage voice was more than a mere entertaining joke. In the opening night, she actually crawled on stage from under Rosalind's dress (see appendix W), but in the other performances, her voice could be heard once more from loud-speakers off-stage. Koetz describes the conception behind Hymen:

> Hymen is a rigid figure, who makes an end to this confusion by bringing back order, regulation […]We did not see Hymen as a figure that simply carried out Rosalind's plan, but as a partly god-like, or demonic figure that comes from another sphere of being, out of which she can say "I stop all this magic and happy world and call you to return to order." Although Katharina did it in a very charming way, it was quite clear that her action put an end to a blissful topsy-turvydom.[261]

And Koetz believes that those "who listened carefully realised that exactly the same voice who has cancelled the reign of time later on reinstalled it again." The reviews make it difficult to share her optimism,[262] but the idea of attributing these two moments to the director allows to understand that the freedom of the forest was not only conceived as a temporary release from the painful constraints and regulations of lived social reality, but what's more, this realm of compensatory pleasures was supervised by the same authoritative, abstract and god-like power that held society together and controlled its regulations. Within the world of this production, Arden turns out to be just an entertaining compensation which people from the court need to function again in

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[261] Hymen's authoritarian call for peace and order, which was characteristically cut from Cheek by Jowl's version, received full attention in Thalbach's production, where the couples submissively walked downstage when they heard this order. To strengthen the restaurative atmosphere, Brasch's translation changes Hymen's wish for Orlando and Rosalind from "You and you no cross shall part" (V.4.130) into the admonition "You two may carry your cross together," focusing on the hardships instead of the love that overcomes them.

[262] Apparently, no critic heard that, for they mentioned Thalbach's voice off-stage as Hymen, but none of them drew a connection to the recorded telephone answer.

their courtly habitat. This interpretation is further strenghtened by the fact that the Duke and his company at the court and in the forest were played by the same actors. This doubling enforces the impression of a circularity that did not include any kind of progress as far as the relation between private and public realm is concerned.[263] The rigid treatment of the marriage was to denounce this "reformed" social reality as equally destructive. Koetz affirms that the production team

> didn't want to play the last scene as a positive moment, as a kind of redemption, a move into elysium. Instead, we decided that these are not voluntary unions but enforced ones, and in our understanding, this regarded all four couples. It should be clear for the spectators that it was most uncertain that these couples awaited a happy future outside the magic forest, in the court. So the question we wanted to put was whether the conditions for a realised relationship could be found only in the magic forest, and whether life at court with its own conditions did not condemn these relationships to failure. We did not see that the couples transformed what they experienced in the forest into a new, possibly higher state of being when leaving the forest. It was rather an enforced return to the court and its repressive regulations.

Brasch confirms this disillusioned concept in an interview with Ernst Schuhmacher: "*Zum Schluß kommt zusammen, was gar nicht zusammen will*."[264] What started as utopian hope, ended as anti-utopian statement. Or rather, the production reveals a strong conviction that the late modern aesthetics as expressed in Arden reduces utopian thought from a transformative power to a mere compensatory relief. This also goes for the possibilities to lead an existence as man and woman beyond gender stereotypes. Brasch's rendering of the words in the epilogue is indicative of this scepticism towards the possibilities of gender play outside a playground like Arden. Brasch significantly changed the meaning of the last four lines of Shakespeare's epilogue in his translation/adaptation. Whereas Shakespeare writes (V.4.214-220) "If I were/A woman, I would kiss as many of you as had/ Beards that pleased me,

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[263] See also Ebert: "*Alles ist auswechselbar, die Gegnerschaften vermischen sich. […] Austausch des Regimes. Na und*?" [Everything is exchangeable, the oppositions mingle. […] Exchange of a political regime. So what?]

complexions that liked/ Me, and breaths that I defied not. And I am sure,/ As many as have good beards, or good faces, or/ Sweet breaths, will for my kind offer, when I make/ Curtsy, bid me farewell," Brasch puts a mere three lines with a clear melancholic thrust, lines that do not function as the Shakespearean invitation, but as a good-bye to both audience and erotic utopia.: "*Wäre ich eine Frau, ich würde alle küssen, wie es/ mir gefällt, wär ich ein Mann, ich würde laufen, so schnell/ ich kann. Und wär ich beides, so ging ich aus der Welt.*"[265] These lines seem to confirm stereotyped assumptions about men's fear of bonding and women's insatiability, as well as affirming once more that there is no place for a polymorphous gender utopia and its erotic possibilities in the world of lived reality.

Hence, the gender confusion and the free-play in Arden are nothing but an aesthetically produced fantasy that has no real power to challenge or transform the social reality at the court. As ultimately a vain fantasy, it is either an unproductive trap or an eternally virtual opportunity, as Koetz description of Maertens' curtsy at the end of the epilogue suggests:

> Michael started to curtsy but stopped in the movement, acting as though he realised that this did not function anymore. He did not resolve this incongruency into a bow, so that the moment appeared as a trap for the figure, or an ever existing possibility, according to the emotional reaction on part of the spectator.

In the same way as the production does not resolve this ultimate gender tension, it does not resolve the tension between the utopia of liberty and the unsurmountable repressive forces within the social realities in the play. For as much as the production concluded the escape from the court by an enforced return to that very structure, it also made clear the indestructable impulse to escape from such structure.

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[264] "At the end, it is being united that which does not want to get united."

[265] "If I were a woman, I would kiss everybody, as I like it, if I were a man, I would run as fast as I can. And if I were both, I would step out of this world.

Moreover, since the forest in Arden, with its open theatricality and dream-like poetic fantasy world, can get compared to the theatrical world as such, the production also poses the questions of the function of theatre within the lived social reality of the spectators and of the transformative energy of theatrical performances. Or more generally, in face of the entertaining effect of the burlesque non-mimetic language, it simultaneously produced and questioned the power of theatrical art as a kind of mass entertainment. Thalbach offered a piece of excellent entertainment, only to problematise its status by making visible the oppressive political frame. Most critics failed to notice this frame, for in its visual language, the production did not overcome late modern aesthetics. Yet, Thalbach did not present late modern witty thrills as a solution to the personal and political dead-end situation deriving from the rigid, oppressive hierarchies in social reality. Eroticism is not a feasible way to liberation.

It seems incorrect under these circumstances to speak of socio-political vibrancy in the production to describe this ambivalence, since it does not shift between transformative and restaurative conclusions. But the production certainly brings about a dilemma, a difficulty to decide between two impossibilities: the submission to socially fixed structures or an idealist belief in the utopia of free play. Under the absence of a possibility for transformative action, all that remains from revolutionary impulses is a desire for revolt. Transgression is turned into licenced trespassing.

CHAPTER 5 Conclusion

This dissertation set out to evaluate the theatrical, erotic, and socio-political effects of male-to-female cross-casting on the twentieth-century Shakespearean stage, by way of analysing four all-male productions of *As You Like It* within changing historical contexts. The most important conclusion that one can draw from the performance analyses consists in the insight as to what extent the effect of all-male casting can get moulded according to the cultural interests and necessities of individual directors, theatre companies and historical periods. The differences in the effects this theatrical procedure has brought about throughout the late twentieth century can be meaningfully organised and highlighted if one considers conception, production, and reception of all-male casting against the background of their implicit cultural assumptions.

The research started with the assumption that contemporary all-male productions of *As You Like It* can blur layers of (gendered) identities on stage and produce the effect that Michael Shapiro calls theatrical vibrancy. Although this hypothesis became confirmed in so far as the all-male casting indeed produced disturbance and amazement regarding the histrionic capacities of cross-cast actors to blur in their performances the dichotomous sex/gender system, we can see that Clifford Williams based his production on a repression of such effect; or rather, he banned such effect to the socially 'lower' characters Audrey and Phoebe, suggesting hence such effect to be more primitive, and in doing so followed traditional lines of interpreting the double-plot in Shakespeare's plays. Declan Donnellan and Katharina Thalbach brought the effect on stage as a crucial element of Rosalind's personality in Arden, her emotional promise and plight. In so far as the theatrical personality and activity of Rosalind are central to both the narrative resolution in the marriage and the production's tactics of reception control – after all,

she seems to have the power to make all the audience one Orlando – both directors shifted the question of gender ambiguity and gender blurring to the ideological centre of the play. Donnellan's version of Rosalind's theatrical vibrancy and his construction of such vibrancy throughout the performance is consciously infused with the problem of how to distribute and redistribute power, reflected in his decision to let the wedding end with a tango, whereas Thalbach sets out to construct Rosalind's gender vibrancy as a utopian realm of endless possibilities for play that wishes to neglect or shun the question of social power. The problematic status of this utopian wish is brought to the fore by Thalbach's recorded voice-over and Brasch's melancholic version of Rosalind's epilogue. Hence, where Donnellan assumes a productive political interpretation of theatrical vibrancy in the tango after Orlando handed over his medal to Rosalind, Thalbach emphasises the impossibility to bridge the gap between this dream of hybrid playfulness and social reality. Therefore, her dramaturg Franziska Koetz can affirm that Michael Maerten's performance of the final dialogue, especially the hapless curtsy, constructs this gender vibrancy either as an ever lurking promise or as a trap for both character and audience – according to the spectators' disposition of how to read the moment.

Petrica Ionescu, on the other hand, was more interested in dissecting bourgeois masculinity and revealing its construction out of a repressive bourgeois gender ideology that not only separated femininity from masculinity but based the latter on the possession of power. Hence, in this critical or as he called it "therapeutic" interest, he deferred the fusion of male and female aspects and appearances to the festive end of the play, although his decision to let the actors perform naked thwarts the effect of theatrical vibrancy in Shapiro's sense as an enigmatic fusion of opposite gender identities. The final marriage in Ionescu's production manages to generate sexual

vibrancy, instead of gender vibrancy, for it blurs the limits between straight and gay masculinity, producing a polymorphous sexuality by which men are invited to accept their sexuality as profoundly bisexual. In contrast to readings of the marriage scene as a central social channeling of energy previously set free, his decision to turn a female beast into Hymen and let the all-male cast engage in a swirling waltz focuses on the possible transformative qualities of marriage as a union of opposites – masculine and feminine energy, mind and body, straight and gay – within the mind and world of men, who, in turn, would finally free themselves from the straightjacket of bourgeois morality.

In diversifying masculinity and infusing it with corporality, Ionescu's production represents a link between Williams' ethereal interpretation of all-male casting and the subsequent productions in the 1990s which problematise the relation between femininity and masculinity, between female and male social roles, between body and mind through a cross-cast and cross-disguised performance that does not want to render female reality invisible or unimportant. Ionescu's theatricality insists on the corporeality of gender performance and denies the flight into abstract sublimation any transformative value. On the contrary, his production claims that men and women in the audience should face bourgeois masculinity as destructive on account of its purification of what appeared as animalesque sexual energy, traditionally considered as feminine. Williams' idealist sublimation of masculinity is, within Ionescu's frame, part of the neurotic bourgeois system that terminates in self-violation and heartless destruction. In its attack on bourgeois male sexuality, Ionescu's approach rendered one can be judged the most transgressive production from a conceptual standpoint. Yet, theatrical weaknesses and a possibly too onesided, and hence too confrontative, approach to issues of gender and sexuality caused this transgressive impulse to be of little effect.

Donnellan's and Thalbach's use of the all-male cast for, at least momentary, metatheatrical effects subscribes to Ionecu's scepticism as regards the usefulness of Platonic idealisations, although it does not share the latter's therapeutic utopia as to be grounded in a liberated polymorphous male sexuality. With Thalbach, the (meta-) theatrical gratification in all-male casting results in little more than a pleasing dead-end street once the performance has to come to an end, whereas in Donnellan's production, theatrical vibrancy is used to generate an awareness of the tension in human actions produced by the clash of social norms of behaviour and inner emotional impulses.

Relating these differences in theatrical vibrancy to the history of mentalities and economic production as sketched out in chapter 2, one can perceive how Williams' stabilising treatment of the all-male cast's potential for theatrical vibrancy harks back to a modern bourgeois desire for purity and idealisation. The dynamic hybridity implied in theatrical vibrancy does not provide the chance to escape from everyday social reality, which Williams deems a constant human desire. Interestingly enough, similar to Williams, Thalbach set out to construct Arden as a kind of "cottage in the countryside," but with theatrical means that link her presentation of an escapist dream with late modern notions of life as an amusement park. The fact that she and translator Thomas Brasch denied this possibility to be a viable strategy to reach full human satisfaction reveals a critical modern nostalgia within a superficially late modern production; the nostalgia appears as modern, for in their construction of Arden, both cling to a modern desire for a utopian realm of liberty and satisfaction. Equally, Thalbach's production foregrounds the unescapable political power play through the doubling of the court characters and the epilogue in such a way that the final marriage scene does not lead to even the smallest changes concerning the relation of power and gender systems. This similarity between Arden and court does insist on a critical modern awareness of the

omnipresence of power as a social category as well as one of self-fashioning, but since the only thinkable solution within the conception of the production is a utopian paradise of magic play, Thalbach's production cannot find images to interpret an effect like theatrical vibrancy as a constant impulse of this play to produce unstability and change within a stabilised power structure such as the state-run organisation of the court. The experience in Arden is too private and stems too much from a well-controlled licence to induce political changes.[266]

Cheek by Jowl's production uses the possibilities of cross-dressing exactly to that end. The famous interpolation of the final tango between Rosalind and Orlando structurally mirrors the stage business with the apron. Both moments show how signs (the body movements, the apron) possess a volatile meaning, i.e., that their social meaning can be made to turn on significations that serve the subversive interests of those who use them. In Rosalind-as-Ganymede's hands, the apron – being a social sign of female restriction and ultimately submission – is used to affirm her/his interest in changing this power position without ultimately producing a new solid power relation, since Rosalind and her desire to be loved are always palpable, as are the male actor and his pleasure to play this character in such a double way as equally affirmative and longing for submission. The stage business with the apron reveals the play with gender attributes as a performanc e based on given social significations of dominance and repression, but with the possibility to redistribute these social significations among the actors in the game. The way both actors tune into the performance with the apron as a symbolic adoption of real power position transforms the social antagonism between ruling man and ruled wife into a play with significations. The communication is now

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[266] As we can see, Thalbach's production rests on a similar opposition as Adrian Noble's mixed-cast one and shares with his the same structural problem of how to turn Arden and the experience it conferred on

marked by differences, not by a fixed antagonism. Likewise, the tango draws on received patriarchal notions of male supremacy and female surrender, but it is used within the performance to dissolve the fixed positions which both sexes are meant to adopt in this dance. Cheek by Jowl's version does not envisage a society free of social power, but one where social power is constantly rearranged and redistributed. Ultimately, the production suggests to treat the question of power not within the context of very concrete material and economic interests, but as a psychic force, which also longs for moments of dissolution. It seems decisive, however, that Rosalind and Orlando embark on the tango only after Orlando has received the decoration from Duke Senior's hands and has given it to Rosalind. The symbolic rearrangement of social and psychic power is framed and made possible only by this disinterest in traditional, patriarchally fixed power positions.

Cheek by Jowl brings a notion of hybrid personality on stage that is both consciously embedded in various social power structures and characterised by a variety of psychic impulses that traverse traditional gender boundaries. This hybridity is not the result of decontextualised psychic desires to reinvent oneself, nor does it derive from a simultaneous existence in distinctive social contexts, but it is the result of a self-conscious attempt to embrace the other gender, its social and psychic reality, within oneself and to relate comprehensively to it, just as Judith Butler has interpreted the Jewish proverb "Welcome the stranger in your midst" (see 2.2).

Cheek by Jowl's usage of different layers of gender identity on the all-male stage concurs with Stallybrass' affirmation that two opposite realities peer into each other's face, but what emerges from this collision of gender identities is not a modern nihilism or late modern playful undecidability, but a very concrete possibility to explore

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the characters into a meaningful experience within the social world of the characters and the lived reality

this hitherto unknown strangeness, to diversify unilateral notions of identity and produce the kind of queer hybridity described earlier in the section on postmodern identity.

This production uses theatrical vibrancy not to construct an identity of enigmatic depth, but of ungrounded, multi-spectral flatness. That is to say that it keeps the simultaneously existing layers of identity apart, a condition in which spectators can a) realise the performative characteristics of each identity, and b) understand the social circumscriptions within which each identity performs its transformative impulses. Instead of producing the riddle of a decontextualised individual essence, the performance produces the riddle of how to dialogue as an individual with a strange other within a restrictive socio-political context that works towards fixation. The final tango makes clear that the foundations of the dialogue are not the foundations of the socio-political repressive legacy, although the dialogue must draw on material provided by the repressive socio-political context.

Similar distinctions that orientated the attitude towards theatrical vibrancy in these four productions can be found as regards their treatment of the erotic implications in all-male casting. The analysis clearly revealed that Williams used the all-male casting within a spiritualised concept of love that attempted to render the body insignificant. This project harks back to traditional modern devaluations of the body as separated from and opposed to the human mind, to a modern utopia of human existence in which the uncontrollable materiality of the body could be overcome.

Within a strictly all-male universe, Ionescu consciously brought the male physical body back on stage in such a way that its erotic usage performed on stage revealed not only how physical pleasure and such usage of the body mirrors political

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of the audience.

power interests, but also that a body liberated from such constraining male power interests – infused with a somewhat "female", not dominating sexuality – may represent the basis for another modern utopia, namely the hope to establish such a liberated body as a locus of plenitude and meaningful experience. In other words, Ionescu simply turned the modern devaluation of the physical body and its erotic potentials upside down in an attempt to establish the male body's sexual liberation as a means towards individual and political transformation – a bourgeois romantic concept of the body and of sexual liberation whose vanity has already been addressed by Foucault. Ionescu's production clearly reveals in its widely grotesque presentation of male gender and in its usage of the male body's erotic potential a critical attitude towards modern bourgeois notions of masculinity that foreshadows postmodern insights into gender and sexuality as hybrid categories. The production also expresses an awareness of the relation between the personal and the political, trying to bring sexual practices on stage that mirror modern political relations between human beings, distinguishing gender mainly between dominant and subservient subejct positions. Yet, in its final image of the naked waltz, it does little to separate a reading of this scene that would follow late modern notions of polymorphous sexuality as a sphere of authentic plenitude, a polymorphous sexual essentialism. The production's suggestion to the audience would then be that, by realising such essentialism, men would finally be able to celebrate their true inner nature freed from the repressive effects of bourgeois political power. The political potential in such a depoliticising strategy would be exactly this seductive lure to turn values upside down: to devalue the sexual potential of power positions and to upgrade the sexual gratification in devotional subject positions. Both the production's critical and utopian use of sexual gratification mark such diversifying of masculinity and male sexuality through all-male performances as a moment of transition from modern to postmodern

forms of discourse, for the production mirrors modern utopias in its desire for a realm of liberation free from politics and late modern utopias in its primordial valuation of the gratifying pleasures provided by the body's polymorphous sexuality.

Thalbach's concept did not pay special attention to the body. Its focus on the erotic qualities in language, on the sexual friction expressed through puns and suggestive dialogues, mirrors the semiotic strategy to convert the physical body on stage into one signifier among others. However, whereas Williams uses the possibility of producing insubstantial identities through all-male performances to advance the utopia of a spiritualised human existence, Thalbach's semiotic desubstantiation of the actor's body promotes and subsequently problematises a utopian human existence as grounded in a playful theatricality whose characteristic is that in its burlesque exchange of desire it does not need to take anything too seriously, neither gender nor political power nor personal emotions. Thalbach uses the all-male theatrical device to illustrate how the ultimate erotic activity on stage consists of the entertaining potential of non-mimetic theatrical play. The all-male cast gives licence to explore the scope and limitations of such entertainment as a form of erotics, to analyse both the erotic and the political potential of de-naturalised, hence unstable artistic signs, not the least the cross-cast and cross-dressed actor's and character's body on stage. This erotisation of unstable sign systems recalls late modern promises of signifiers as ideally free floating. Thalbach's show recognises the limitations of such concepts by charcterising it as a form of escapism, a compensatory entertainment. The production does not manage to (or want to) find images in which this playful unstability becomes politically effective and productive. The strict opposition between utopian erotics and restrictive politics, between the desired free plenitude in artistic imagination and the repressive reality in lived social reality as expressed in the treatment of Arden as a licenced amusement

park, brings the production to adopt a critical position on late modern concepts of identity and social reality, but it does not allow to take this critique beyond a residual modern context.

It is the merit of Cheek by Jowl's production to bring on stage bodies and objects that are marked as artistic signs, as indexical elements, as openly performative signs, but to characterise this performance as drawing and calling upon both the social reality of the characters within the narrative of the play and the lived social reality of the spectators. The cited apron stage business becomes an erotic signifier through the way Rosalind uses its social signification, namely by inviting Orlando to adopt a given social position and play with it. Hence, the production makes clear how a seductive game on stage, when drawing on and inverting power positions, can generate erotically subversive effects. The apron is not turned into a volatile social sign, but is used as a social sign with a relatively fixed social meaning in a liberating way. An object that commonly identifies a fixed social position of submission is now turned to signify the pleasure of momentary submission in a game that is about the exchange of such power positions. The erotic effect of the game lies in the simultaneous presence of both layers of meaning produced by the apron which renders none of them the ultimate one. What's more, this usage does not yield an enigmatic semantic collation as a mystic horizon of the sign's purported semantic plenitude. Since a similar conclusion can be drawn from Adrian Lester's presentation of Rosalind/Ganymede and the way Lester put the physical and imaginative body on stage, we can conclude that the erotics of Donnellan's production does not establish a utopian realm of plenitude nor does it understand the lived reality as an inmutable and fixed one. By way of proxy, it encourages the spectators to explore the multiple ways in which objects with fixed social meanings can be used and thus gain multiple meanings, among them socially subversive ones.

In this distance to both modern and late modern essentialist notions of identity and erotics and their relation, Donnellan's concept is embedded in postmodern constructivist concepts that do not subscribe to liberal ideals of identity as the product of autonomous self-fashioning nor understand identity as a mere effect of social processes. Instead, his approach manages to show the postmodern notion of identity as a constant process through which the individual (actor, character or spectator) negotiates his/her inner reality with the social reality and the pressures put on him/her by this reality. This understanding of identity as constant negotiation puts Cheek by Jowl's production in a singular position as regards the way it constructs on stage the relation between aesthetic reality and lived social reality, i.e., the way it conceives the subversive functions and possibilities of aesthetic gender politics for an all-male cast version of *As You Like It*.

If Williams' production separates the aesthetic realm of Arden as a harmonic sexless utopia from the harsh physical realities and political interests in the court, it also preserves conservative bourgeois notions on the function of art as a utopian *locus amoenus* (Williams' "cottage in the countryside") that needs to be free of political and emotional interests in order to fulfil its objective of expressing the ideal of what's best in human beings, in this case a gender identity that is not "infected" by socio-political interests and physical drives. The implicit gender prejudices in such an intellectual and bodiless notion of gender went unquestioned and unnoticed in the reviews of the show, as did the conservative political assumption on the legitimacy of separating a truly artistic utopia from its political context.

In its double thrust towards purely aesthetic unisex gender construction and gender desubstantiation Williams' show could attract both non-political members of a younger audience, who started to populate the streets with their unisex fashion and

hairstyle, and traditional theatre goers who not only wanted to see their traditional anthropological assumptions on the importance of mind over body expressed, but also their belief in the morally uplifting effect of Shakespeare's plays confirmed. The submission to such a traditional distinction between mind and body allowed this all-male performance of *As You Like It* to avoid a subversive presentation of gender if measured against bourgeois notions of identity. It also evaded Sedinger's conclusion about the epistemological crisis embodied in the cross-cast and cross-dressed actor, for the production refused to address the question of what nature the cross-dressed body on stage would be. What mattered was to render the physical body insignificant. Part of the moral relief as voiced in the press can be interpreted as a proof that the production did so quite successfully. It represents an excellent example of an all-male performance that can successfully avoid to put non-bourgeois sexuality on stage, and in achieving such spiritualised identity on stage can promote traditional bourgeois values.

Thalbach gives this bourgeois notion of the ultimate objective in art, namely to point at a fundamentally insubstantial, transcendental ideal, a more contemporary face by transforming the relation of bodies, light and stage business into a burlesque play of mere signs, although the popular burlesque style and emotionality expose the ethereal element in this dream to a certain ridicule. Under Thalbach's hands and within the context of the early 1990s in Germany, i.e., after the advent and widespread reception of postmodernism, poststructuralism and deconstruction, this all-male performance equally refutes the possibility to transfer Sedinger's thesis on the cross-cast actor's liminal status to a late modern context, for within this context nobody earnestly cares about the fixity of a sign or gender as a supposedly unified referent of a body on stage. Thalbach's production is lucid enough to perceive the political problematics in such a utopia of uncommitted and unrestrained volatile identities, but the way it incorporates this

critique into the production, namely through the taped voice of the director, is not linked to the all-male casting in any intrinsic way. In other words, the production recognises the socio-political harmlessness in its non-substantive, entertaining use of all-male casting. In doing so, it criticises the audience's desire to identify with Arden as a world in which desire is polymorphous and volatile.

Ionescu, with his assumption of Shakespeare as a psychotherapist, seems to have intended a subversive production of *As You Like It* in terms of sexual politics. He certainly achieved a strong provocation by charging the male members in the audience to explore their homosexual potentials. Ionescu not only played on bourgeois fears about the border between between being a hetero- or homosexual (and easily managed to upset bourgeois spectators, while the gay community flocked to the few performances of the show), he also insinuated a non-bourgeois norm of what it means to be a sexually liberated man. Yet, behind his onslaught on bourgeois gender essentialism lurks another gender essentialism, namely the presupposition that adult men are essentially polymorphous sexual beings. What's more, the social relevance of this liberated masculinity remains vague, and polymorphous sexual virility comes to represent a non-political utopia. It has to do so, in order virtually to fulfil a dream of plenitude, as do Williams' sublime androgeneity and Thalbach's world of semantic free play. Ionescu's production shares with Williams' an almost ingenuous belief in the healing truth of such utopia, whereas Thalbach's approach is too experienced not to understand and incorporate the vanity of such belief.

Against such modern and late modern static attitudes towards utopia, Cheek by Jowl advances an unstable image of utopia as a change of power positions, in which Rosalind and Orlando show that they accept the existence of power positions, the need to play with this power, as well as their consciousness that to play this power game in a

creative and productive way; one must be willing not only to swap power positions, to adopt subsequently performances of leadership and submission, but also to perform them in a mutually acceptable way. This mutual acception of power positions is the critical moment expressed, for instance, when Orlando turns away from Rosalind and ponders his emotions as to whether he can accept Rosalind fooling him and treating him the way she did in Arden. The utopia in Cheek by Jowl's production consists in this mutual consent.

Finally, the production seeks to establish a complicity with the audience, and hence its socio-political relevance, by enacting this consent on swapping power positions as a dialogue with the spectators. It abruptly interrupts the tango, so that Rosalind/Lester must leave the arms of Orlando, interrupt the celebrations, and taking off his hair ribbon directly addresses the audience as male actor in female dress. The dialogue in its proper sense then is established by returning to tango on stage when the audience begins to applaud. This response on stage seems like a qualification and a reminder that the fascination with this all-male casting in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* stems from a pleasure not only in theatrically queered identities, but also implies an accordance with queer politics as one in which subjects playfully revert power positions.

It needs to be highlighted, however, that this display of a symbolic reversal of power positions as a social utopia most probably resonates within audience members that do not feel disenfranchised from social power in a fundamental way, because it seems difficult to believe that people segregated or repressed by very real hegemonic forces in their lived experience would be content with a mere symbolic change of power positions. Cheek by Jowl's utopia targets a subject that feels no personal or political need to identify with an essentialist notion of identity, but with a hybrid, dialogic one.

In order to believe in the appropriateness of such models, one must be able to perceive as a set of mere differences what others call social antagonism. Under given circumstances, this is possible only if one either looks only at her/his own social class or simply negates the existence of antagonistic power interests that cannot get symbolically resolved.

It seems safe to assume that Cheek by Jowl's performances in Europe and overseas were visited by an audience that in its majority not only saw itself as tolerant and open-minded, but also lived in material circumstances that allowed to cherish such dialogic utopia – but only for the members of its own class, since it seems more than doubtful that in lived reality such materially privileged spectators would yield their power positions, which by way of proxy they enjoy to simulate in the theatre.

Cheek by Jowl's utopia can only get actually realised if one is willing to transfer Orlando's symbolic handing over of the medal to Rosalind into concrete political action and legislation. If we take this moment as the politically decisive one in Donnellan's show, then we must conclude that ultimately the production does not envisage a polymorphous gender utopia as a basis for human solidarity, but rather as the side effect of a political practice towards social equality. In other words, the pleasures found in an interaction beyond fixed social significations – displayed to the audience as something to be "obtained" in moments like the apron stage business, the passing on of the medal and the tango, but also in Rosalind's ambiguous stage presence as both affirmative and fragile – serve as a decoy for the spectators not only to embark on these games, but also to initiate viable political actions towards a social situation in which human connectedness, instead of a defined common ground, allows the existence of differences, and not of fixed hierarchies, and as such provides the real, sustainable basis for such crossing of power positions. From this point of view, Donnellan's

metatheatrically and politically sensitive usage of the all-male cast not only entertains the audience through a display of the erotic pleasures and emotional risks when transgressing fixed power positions, but contains elements to dislocate both a late modern polymorphous gender utopia and a late modern political complacency. Once actors and audience have left behind the possibility of a stable gender utopia (one that is built on account of its stability on an antagonistic structure), they can focus on the real question: how to dislocate fixed power relations and initiate a “round-about”of crossing power positions. Different from the other three productions, Donnellan’s all-male version of *As You Like It* is about a constant dislocation and rearrangement of power positions. In this “para-utopian” approach, the show seems to be exemplary for a postmodern political aesthetics on Shakespeare’s all-male stage; an aesthetics that does not exploit the all-male stage to resolve inherent aesthetic, moral, and socio-political contradictions into images of sublime, polymorphous, or burlesque conciliation. Instead, Donnelan’s production uses these contradictions to subvert such symbolic harmonisations and maintain a political dynamics that entails a reversal of power positions. Since there are reasons to take Cheek by Jowl’s production as exemplary for a contemporary dismissal of modern and late modern positions, it reveals that gender crossing has ceased to represent a utopian goal in itself, as in the other three productions. It has become an important tool to subvert fixed notions of identity and common ground, but ceased to represent and construct a utopian goal in itself. Its utopia is rather the one of the “fulfilled moment”, when social regulations of morality and behaviour are subverted and connectedness between human individuals is achieved.

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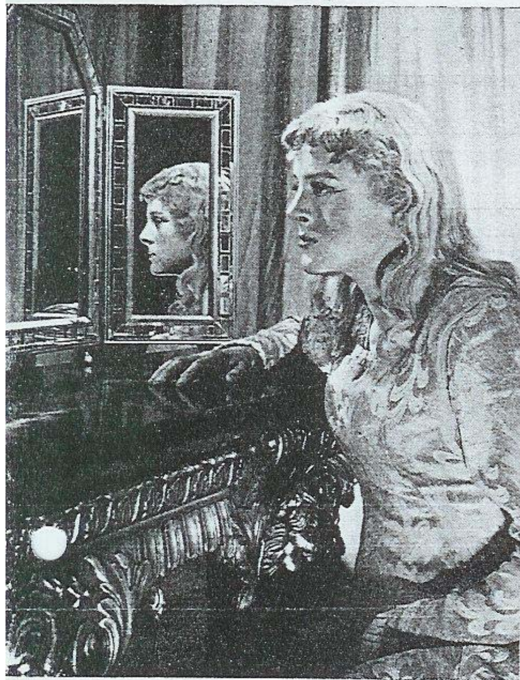
Appendices

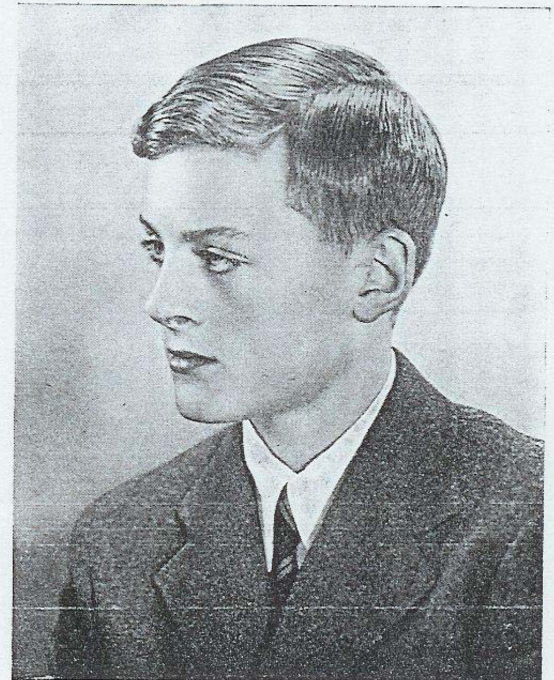
Appendix A

Paul Scofield as Juliet (left) and Laurence Olivier as Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Source: National Theatre Archive

Appendix B

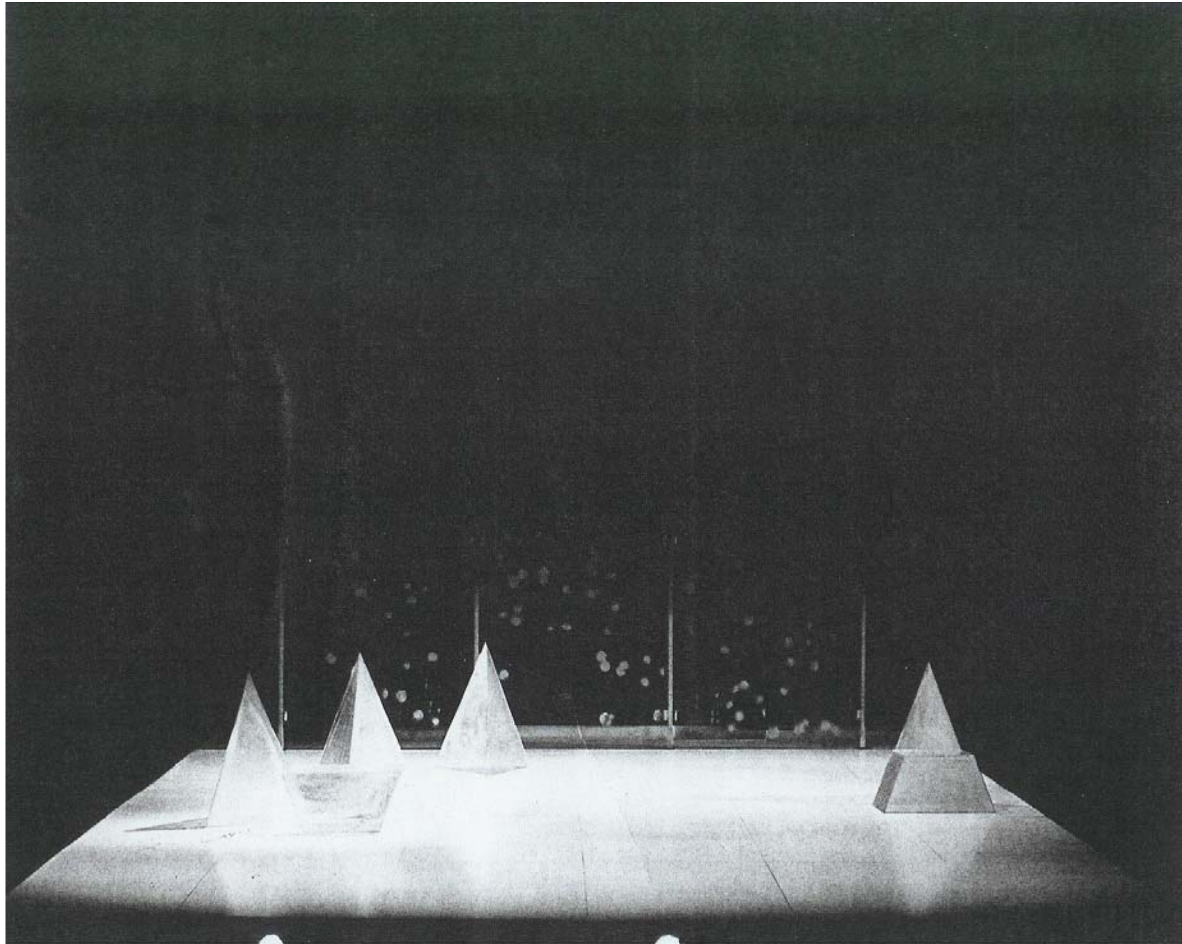

DESDEMONA, Ian Clatworthy


Ian Clatworthy

Othello

Illustration from Guy Boas' defense of the boy actor

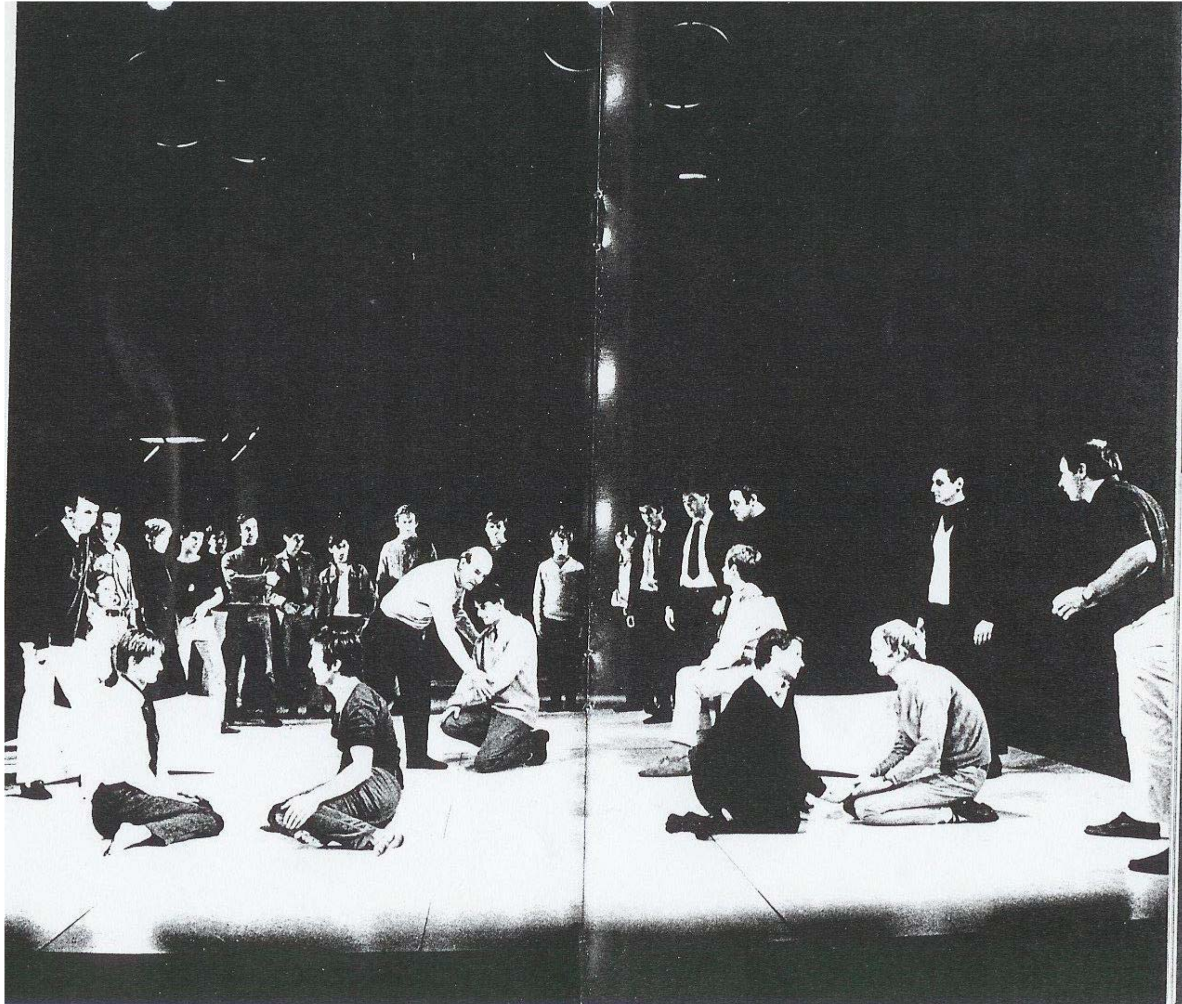
Appendix C



The Court in Arden – Ralph Koltai´s modernist set design

Source: National Theatre Archive

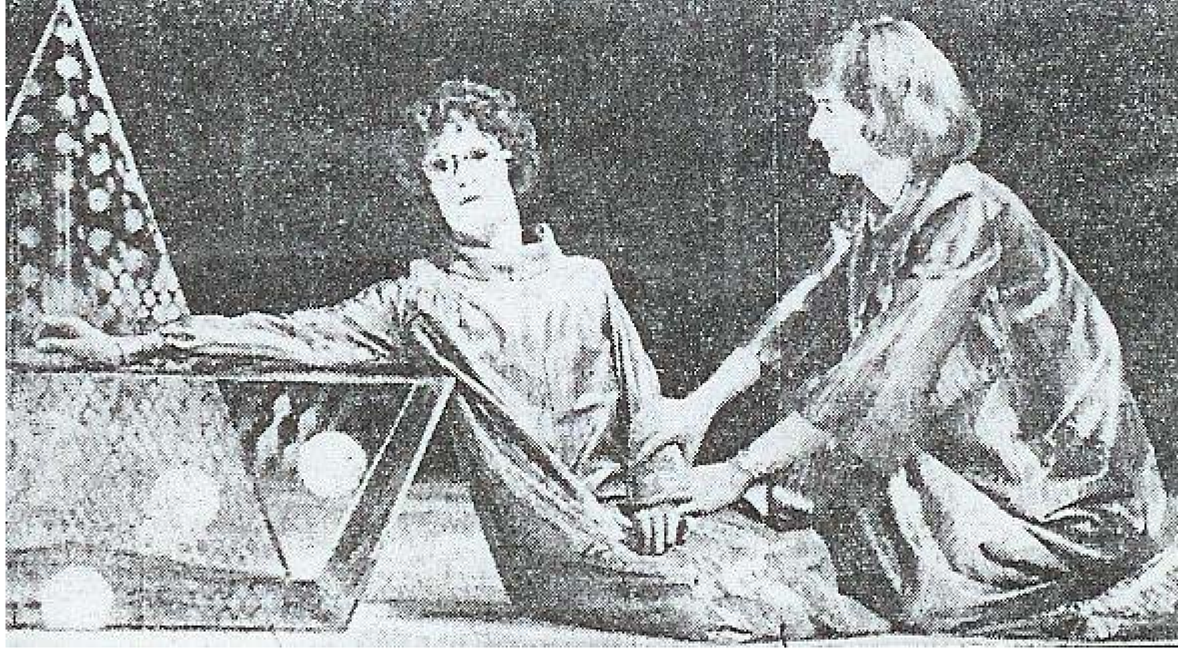
Appendix D



Clifford Williams 1967 – the final wedding scene (rehearsal)

Source: National Theatre Archive

Appendix E



Rosalind and Celia at the court (probably end of act 1)

Source: National Theatre Archive

Appendix F

Clifford Williams - the mock wedding scene

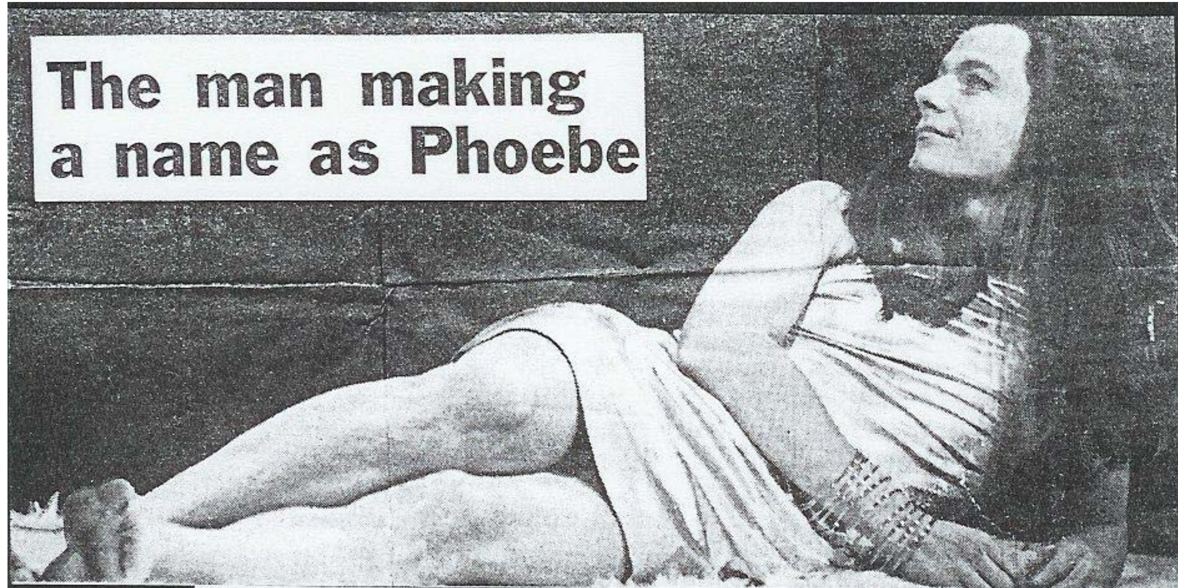
Source: National Theatre Archive

Appendix G

Orlando (left) and Ganymede (right) in the forest (Act IV)

Source: National Theatre Archive

Appendix H



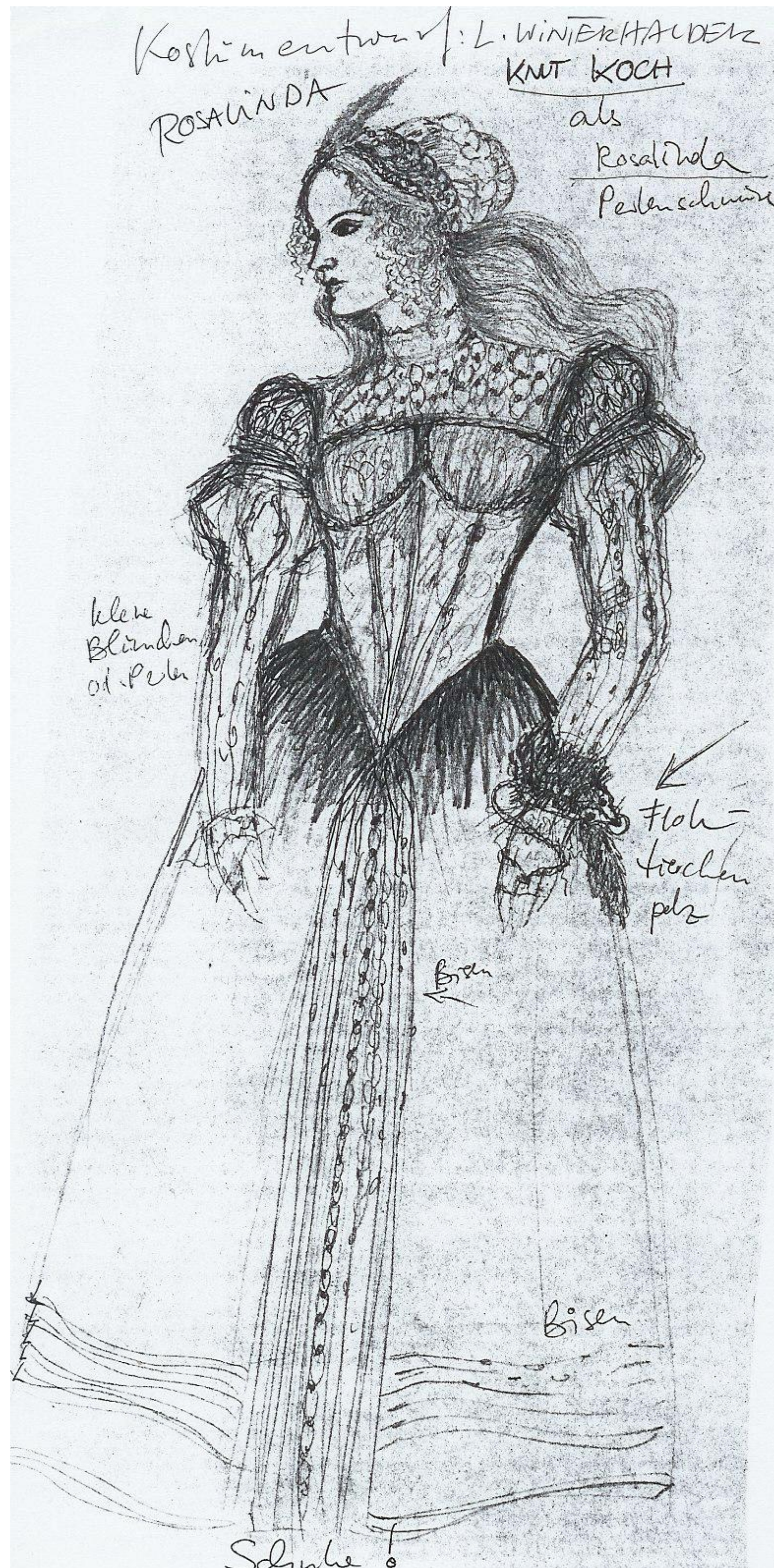
The only ambivalent drag element in Williams' show – Charles Kay as a gypsy Phebe

Appendix I

Ronald Pickup in the epilogue: Science Fiction as Haute Couture

Source: National Theatre Archive

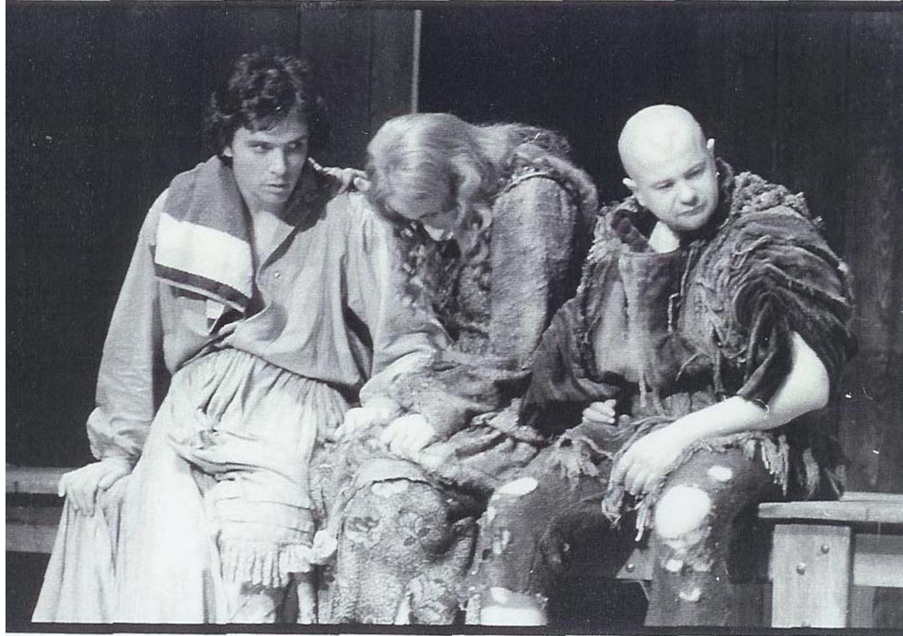
Appendix J



Rosalind´s court costume in Ionescu's 1976 production in Bochum. Costume drawing by designer Lioba Winterhalder. Source: Lioba Winterhalder private archive.

Appendix K

Pictures taken at the rehearsals for Ionescu's production at the Schauspielhaus Bochum



Taking a rest in Arden; Knut Koch as Ganymede (left), Werner Eggenhofer as Aliena (middle) and Ernst Konarek as Touchstone (right)

Werner Eggenhofer, trying on Celia's costume. Behind, costume designer Lioba Winterhalder.

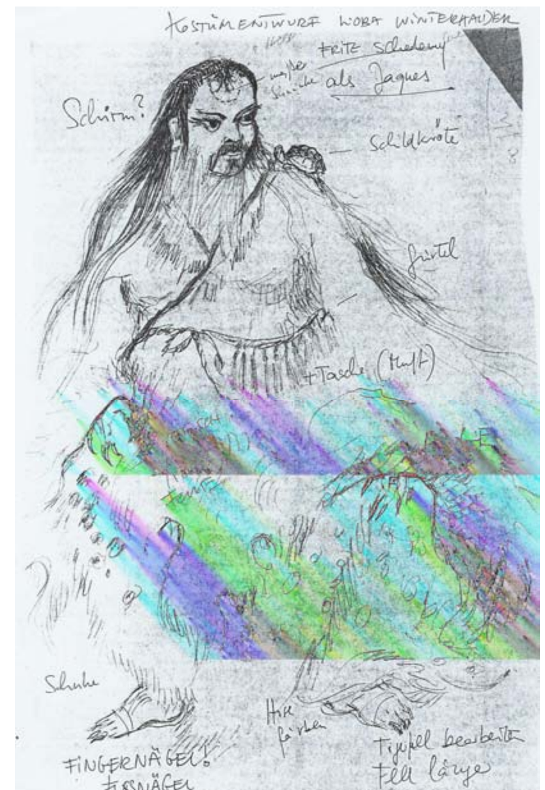
Source: Lioba Winterhalder private archive

Appendix L

To my knowledge one of the few surviving images of the actual show: Knut Koch as Rosalind (left), Ernst Konarek as Touchstone (middle), Werner Eggenhofer as Celia (right). Judging by the costumes, a moment from Act 1.

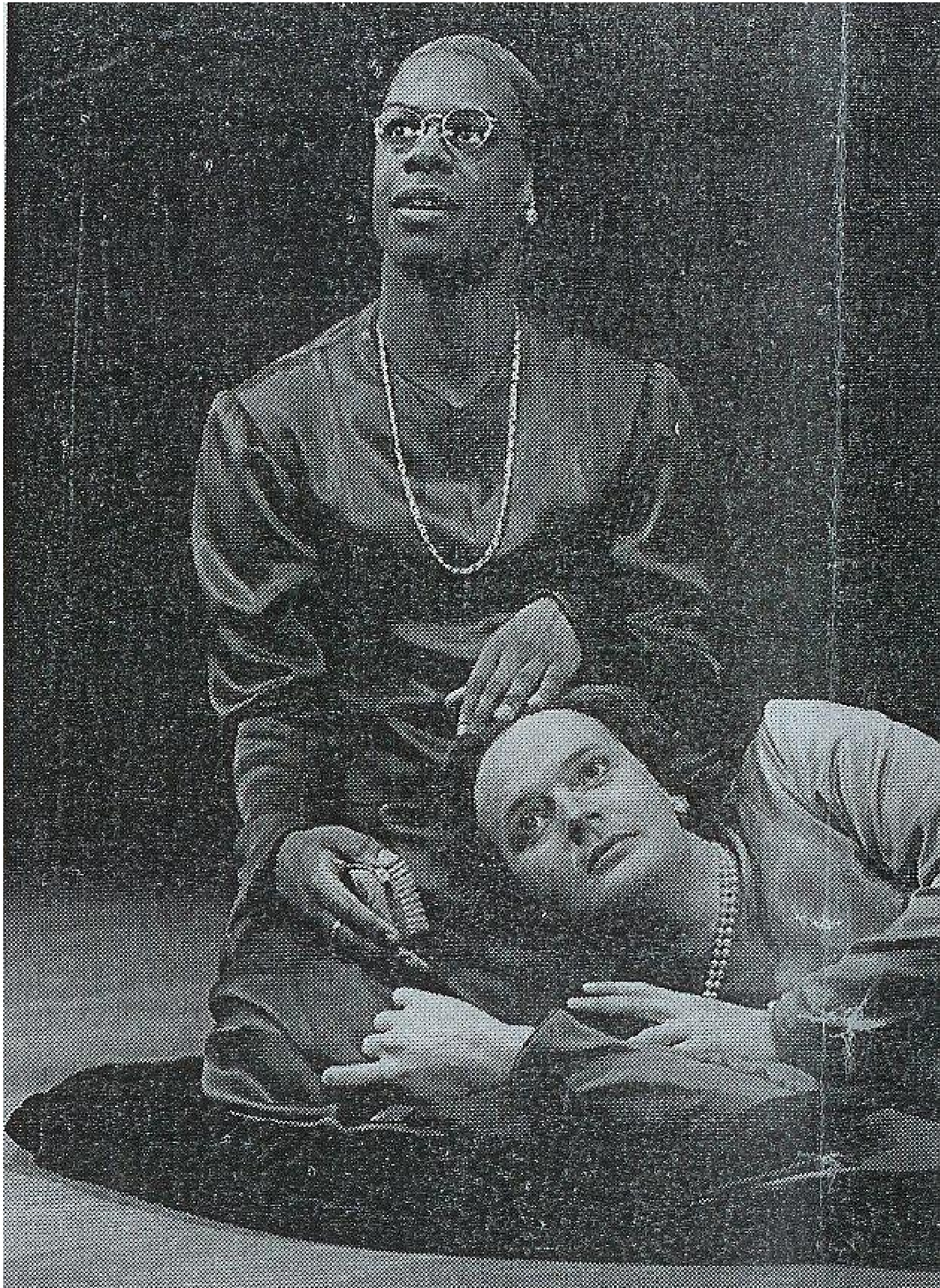
Appendix M

Shepherd Corin as satyr. Costume drawing by Lioba Winterhalder.
Source: Private Archive Winterhalder



A pagan Jaques. Costume design by Lioba Winterhalder
Source: Private Archive Lioba Winterhalder

Appendix N



Adrian Lester as Rosalind (left) and Simon Coates as Celia (right): moments of intimacy at the court.
Source: The Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, London.

Appendix O

Adrian Lester as Rosalind (right) and Simon Coates as Celia (left): moments of intimacy at the court.
Source: The Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, London.

Appendix P

Adrian Lester as Ganymede (left) and Simon Coates as Aliena (right). Aliena's jealousy in Arden and Rosalind's almost hysterical joy about the encounter with Orlando.
Source: The Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, London.

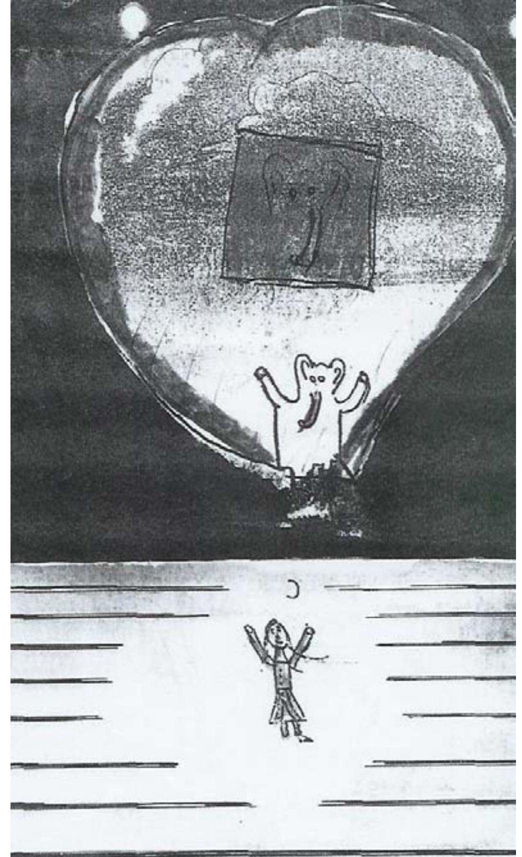
Appendix Q

The famous wedding scene. Coates as Celia (left) and Lester as Rosalind (right)
Source: The Victoria and Albert Theatre Museum Archive, London.

Appendix R

Back cover of the programme of Katharina Thalbach´s production, paying hommage to *commedia dell'arte*.
Source: Deutsches Theatermuseum München

Appendix S



Two cards from the cardboard game as programme forming a consistent stage design. Cards were interchangeable. On the backside, Brasch's sentences, to be combined in an arbitrary way.
Source: Deutsches Theatermuseum München

Appendix T

Michael Maertens as a phallic Rosalind just after having decided to leave the court for Arden. Below: Touchstone (middle) as a babylike monster.
Source: Deutsches Theatermuseum München

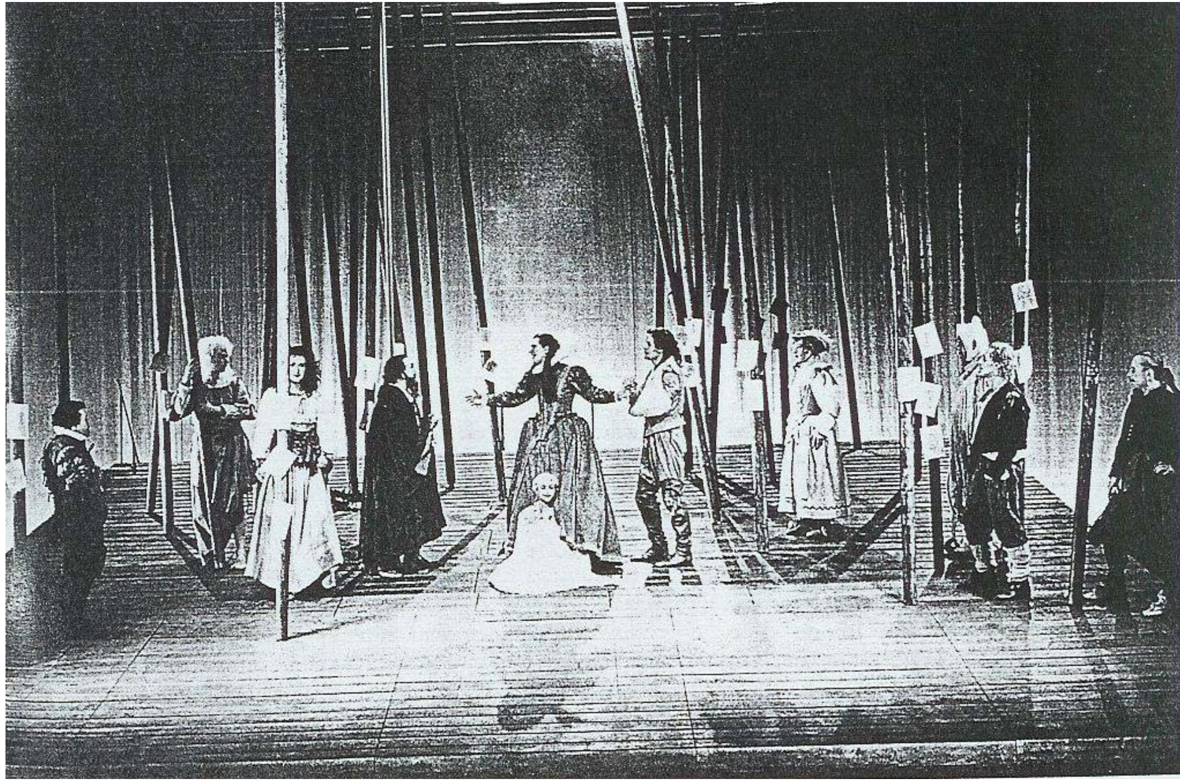
Appendix U

Michael Maertens as Ganymede (left) and Stefan Merki as Aliena (right).
Source: Deutsches Theatermuseum München

Appendix V

Above and below: androgyneity in Maerten´s performance as Ganymede.
Source: Deutsches Theatermuseum München

Appendix W



The final wedding scene in Thalbach´s opening night: in the middle, sitting on the floor, director Katharina Thalbach as a somewhat mischievous god Hymen. Behind, Rosalind with Orlando addressing her father Duke senior. The image allows a good impression of Enzo Toffolutti´s sparse imaginative set design for Arden: hanging poles as trees.
Source: Deutsches Theatermuseum München.