

“ALL THE PROPORTIONS ARE CHANGED”:
TWELFTH NIGHT AND THE EVOLUTION
OF THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF
MISE EN SCÈNE IN PORTUGAL¹

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The actual persons of Malvolio, Sir Toby, Olivia and the rest expand our visionary characters out of all recognition. At first we are inclined to resent it. You are not Malvolio; or Sir Toby either, we want to tell them; but merely impostors. We sit gapping at the ruins of the play, at the travesty of the play. And then by degrees this same body or rather all these bodies together, take our play and remodel it between them. The play gains immensely in robustness, in solidity. The printed word is changed out of all recognition when it is heard by other people. We watch it strike upon this man or woman; we see them laugh or shrug their shoulders, or turn aside to hide their faces. The word is given a body as well as a soul. Then again as the actors pause, or topple over a barrel, or stretch their hands out, the flatness of the print is broken up as by crevasses or precipices; all the proportions are changed.

Virginia Woolf (208)

The first idea for this essay was to combine two of the more recent Portuguese productions of two different Shakespearean plays, directed both by Ricardo Pais—namely *Noite de Reis* (*Twelfth Night*), in 1998,

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and *Hamlet*, in 2002—with a sketchy history of the previous presence of those plays in the Portuguese theatre. The purpose was to articulate the different historical moments of the creation and presentation of those two plays in Portugal with the evolution of theatre practice itself, especially the different means and notions surrounding the staging or *mise en scène* of plays. This plan proved to be too ambitious and I ended up being forced to choose only one of those plays. I finally decided to address what I understand to be the more modest but very significant history of *Twelfth Night* within the developments of Portuguese theatre in the twentieth century. Two very different methodologies will be used here, simply because in one case I am limited to the written and visual documents left behind by the theatrical event, and in the other I have, together with a richer documentation, the personal experience of having attended the performance. My main contention is that the two Portuguese productions of Shakespeare's elusive *Twelfth Night* that I will be discussing correspond to two very different moments in the history of Portuguese theatrical practice, determined not only by different historical periods, and the cultural and political circumstances in which they occurred, but also by an ever evolving understanding of theatre creation and the understanding theatre artists have of the relation between text and stage.

In 1998, before and after the première of that Portuguese *Twelfth Night* directed by Ricardo Pais, for the Teatro Nacional S. João, in Porto, no journalist or critic mentioned any previous Portuguese production of the play. Given the fact that most of the news in the press announcing forthcoming theatre productions used the material provided by the theatre companies, it could be reasonably concluded that the National Theatre didn't include such information in their press releases, simply due to lack of information or to the consideration that it didn't matter. More serious was an honest statement included in a six-page article on that production published in the pages of a cultural magazine, declaring, under the heading "Shakespeare in Portuguese", that "as far as *Twelfth Night* is concerned, we can't tell where and when it was seen in Portugal for the first time" (Pacheco 1998: 135). This acknowledged ignorance

became all the more disturbing not only because some of the actors involved in that first Portuguese production of the play were (and are) still alive, but also because it so clearly revealed the need for accurate and easily accessible instruments to satisfy both the urgent need for information geared towards theatre audiences and the more careful curiosity of the researcher. The fact is that *Twelfth Night* had indeed already been produced in Portugal and some of the features associated with that previous production could surely shed an interesting light on some particularities of that new and more complex creation.

The story of the presence of *Twelfth Night* in the Portuguese theatre begins only in 1948, when the Lisbon Players performed the play in its original language in the gardens of the English Embassy in Lisbon. But the first truly Portuguese production of *Twelfth Night* opened the 27th November 1957, at the Teatro da Trindade, also in Lisbon, where it was presented until the 19th January of the following year. It was the first production of a new company, the Teatro Nacional Popular, directed by Francisco Ribeiro, popularly known as Ribeirinho. Before considering in more detail some of the circumstances associated with that production, it needs to be said that, based on the information provided by the current state of the Database of the Centre for Theatre Studies, that *Twelfth Night* was the fourth of Shakespeare's comedies to be ever presented on a Portuguese stage. The only other three comedies presented or produced prior to 1957 were *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Merchant of Venice had been presented three times by the Italian actor Ernesto Rossi's company, in 1868, 1884 and 1896, in an adaptation, under the title *Shylock*; in 1896, the title role was played by Emmanuel Rossi. Another Italian production was presented in 1895 by Ermete Novelli, also an Italian international star. The first Portuguese production of that play was presented at the Teatro da Trindade in 1920, with stage and costume design by Augusto Pina (the successor of Luigi Manini in the company Rosas & Brazão), directed by António Pinheiro, with Ferreira da Silva in the title role.

The Taming of the Shrew also had a foreign première in Portugal, again by Ermete Novelli, in 1895, at the Teatro D. Amélia, and that was the production that almost undoubtedly convinced Eduardo Brazão to produce the play, the year after. Sharing the stage with Rosa Damasceno (his previous Ophelia), and using a French adaptation by Paul Delair, Eduardo Brazão didn't manage to obtain the same kind of success that he had achieved with *Othello*, in 1882, and *Hamlet*, in 1887. More than fifty years passed before another Portuguese production of that play, in 1952, was staged at the Teatro Monumental, in another adaptation, this time by Gino Saviotti, and with two stars of the commercial theatre of the time, Laura Alves and Paulo Renato. (These same actors would return to the play, in 1964, the year of Shakespeare's fourth centenary, that time translated and directed by the playwright Luís de Stau Monteiro.)

A Midsummer Night's Dream was first seen on the Portuguese stages through the presentation of Ambroise Thomas' opera, with a very free libretto by Joseph-Bernard Rosier, at the Teatro de S. Carlos, first in 1878 and later in 1893. The first Portuguese theatre production of the play was translated by Charles David Levy and directed by Amélia Rey Colaço and Robles Monteiro, produced only in 1941 by the company directed by these two actors, and performed in the Parque de Palhavã, with sets and costumes designed by José Barbosa and using the celebrated music of Mendelsohn. The same company would return to the play in 1952, this time under the direction of Erwin Meyenburg and with the stage and costume design of Lucien Donat, performed at the Teatro D. Maria II.

The decision to stage a Shakespearean comedy like *Twelfth Night* in 1957 in Portugal appears at first sight as, if not courageous, at least rather daring. A small advertisement found in the newspaper *O Século* (24 November 1957) gives us some interesting clues: "Shakespeare!" in capital letters and with an exclamation mark, and, in smaller capital letters: "Heavens! Let not this name frighten anyone!"² The title of the play is followed by another surprising expression, again in capital letters and with another exclamation mark: "Avoid, thus, the panic!" The

director Francisco Ribeiro, in an interview published the day of the première, in *Diário Popular*, clarified the reasoning and strategy behind such warnings:

I'm not expecting the critics to offer me a medal for this act of courage, but the truth is, as you well know, that, unfortunately, the name of Shakespeare still frightens many people. In general, the majority of people associate the name of the playwright with terrible and dense tragedies like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* (...) and others, of an incomparable dramatic beauty, "but frightening", as people say. That audience ignores, even if we don't know why, that Shakespeare was an equally remarkable writer of comedies, as we had the opportunity to appreciate here in Lisbon, not long ago, with *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that were two successes. (Ribeiro 6)

Most of the news published in the press the day of the première reproduced what must have been a carefully planned press release sent by the company, because they all list the various reasons for the exceptional nature of the occasion: the presentation in Lisbon of Teatro Nacional Popular, subsidized by the Fundo do Teatro; the première in Portugal of this Shakespearean comedy; the reopening of the refurbished Teatro da Trindade in the centre of Lisbon; the *mise en scène* of Ribeirinho; a cast of very young actors, with a special role for the already celebrated actress Eunice Muñoz; the collaboration of three renowned and experienced artists like the composer Frederico de Freitas, the set designer José Barbosa and the costume designer Abílio Matos e Silva.

Besides stressing the visual richness of the production, another common feature in all these reports is the characterisation they offer of the play: the story is presented as "delightful to the spirit", the different plots described as "kind, pleasant, irresistible" (Cf. Anon. 1957a, Anon. 1957b). The reviews that appeared in the days immediately after the première were practically unanimous in stressing the quality and the

beauty of the production. Particularly revealing of the then confirmed paradigms used for the evaluation of a theatre production are the compliments for the “homogeneity” and “unity” achieved in the performance, qualities for which Ribeirinho is presented as the major person responsible. Jorge de Faria, in the pages of *Diário Popular*, suggests that “among us, perhaps only Ribeirinho could have articulated these two elements [Shakespeare’s fantasy and his charming lyricism], through a wonderful devising, giving us in so expressive, so colourful, and so lively a way, his *mise en scène*, aware of the tiniest detail and making sure that the whole performance had the necessary unity, harmony and rhythm”; speaking about the actors’ work, he adds that “they all lived their characters intensely, but, what is more, as part—a very rare thing—of the ensemble”, to conclude: “Yesterday’s unforgettable night opened a clear and vast horizon” (Faria 2, 3).

Fernando Fragoso, in the *Diário de Notícias*, identified the same qualities, equally stressing the “necessary unity”, the “team work”, lyrically conveying the idea that “Francisco Ribeiro has visited the Trindade like spring over a winter landscape” (Fragoso 5). Matos Sequeira, in *O Século*, applauded all the elements of the production, from the set and costume design, including the use of light, to the performers, always with a special reference to the “graceful” interpretation of Eunice Muñoz, to conclude, with no less inspiration: “We repeat: yesterday’s opening should be inscribed with a white stone in the history of our present theatre” (Sequeira 6). This idea of experiencing a historical moment reappears in other reviews. In the pages of *Diário da Manhã*, the reviewer confesses his feeling that the Portuguese theatre has been rejuvenated: “After attending this performance the conviction that we have been feeling for some time that the Portuguese theatre is on the right path becomes stronger” (A. 6).³

Equally revealing were the impressions on that Shakespeare’s play conveyed by some of these articles. The reviewer from *Diário da Manhã* stressed the idea, permeating other texts, that *Twelfth Night* is a “light comedy”, reflecting the “ingenuity of its time” (*Ibidem*). Luís de Oliveira Guimarães, in the *República*, goes even further stating that

"*Twelfth Night* is not more than a comedy or, better, a fantasy, at the same time, naïf, improbable and ingenious (...). It is in fact a theatrical *fait-divers* without any other purpose except to entertain its audience, not too demanding of ideas or dramatic conflicts, for two hours, after lunch or after dinner" (Guimarães 3). Norberto Lopes, in a long review on the pages of *Diário de Lisboa*, described the play in the following terms: "It's a joyful story combined with tenderness the one that Shakespeare tells us, in an almost perfect theatrical design, a story that makes us smile and amuses us, sometimes leading the audience to laugh, due to picaresque situations and the ridiculous nature of some characters, whose personalities the author paints with surprising powers of observation and insight" (Lopes 3). And Armando Ferreira, writing for *Jornal de Comércio*, even dares to suggest that the work of the director was so good that he managed to transform a boring story without any interest into an extremely appealing performance (Ferreira 3-4).

As I have already mentioned, among all the praise dedicated to the production, critics were unanimous both in stressing Eunice Muñoz's performance—either for the modernity of her acting, "without any trace of the old and hateful art of declamation" (*Ibidem*), or for the "gracefulness, freshness and emotion" that she demonstrates in her male attire—and in their eulogy of the unity and homogeneity of the production, revealing the "strong hand of the director" (Lopes 3). More than thirty years later, Vítor Pavão dos Santos, in the pages of the catalogue of the exhibition that the Portuguese National Theatre Museum dedicated to the actress in 1991, recalled the production in very positive terms, adding a vivid description of the performance by Eunice Muñoz:

Relying on a good acting ensemble, that his direction knew how to balance, [Ribeirinho] created a remarkable performance, in which Eunice Muñoz, leading actress of the company, was a wonderful Viola, unforgettable in her arrival in that strange land, later incorporating, with an acting pleasure that easily reached the audience, the masculine

disguise, in the crafty ruses with which Shakespeare manipulates that game of life's hazards. (Santos 54)

The interpretation of the role of Viola by Eunice, to make faith in the commentaries of the journalist and critics, seems to have developed more the professed modesty of the character than on any kind of titillation provided by the male costume she wore during almost the duration of the play. In an era unaware of the political uses of cross-gender, the travesty appeared as part of an innocent theatrical convention used with equal irrelevance in the revues in Parque Mayer and in the production of other classical plays.

Significantly, the only truly critical and dissenting voice appeared in January 1958, on the pages of the *Gazeta Musical e de Todas as Artes*, by the hand of Jorge de Sena, in a review with which the writer and scholar resumed his activity of theatre critic, interrupted in 1952. With his characteristic style, Sena attacked not only what he identified as the misgivings of Ribeirinho's direction, but also the ignorant reaction of the Portuguese critics expressed prior to him. One of his main focuses of criticism was the translation by Francisco Ribeiro and Francisco Lage, both responsible for a text that in the critic's opinion could no longer be considered as written by Shakespeare, because it didn't take into account either the "psychological atmosphere of the dialogue" or the imagery that carries "the occult meanings of the motivations and of the dramatic intelligence of the characters". The translators are charged with the responsibility of having turned Shakespeare's "subtle and complex" comedy into a "graceful and superficial adaptation"—and here Sena uses in a negative sense one of the adjectives more positively employed by the other reviewers, "graceful". And he adds:

Twelfth Night is a pure verbal *ballet*, characterized by the most extraordinary poetry and by a sexual ambiguity capable of appalling any simple-minded or prejudiced person that meditates on the deeper meaning of the avowals of love in which the many misunderstandings of the play abound. (Sena 170)

He admitted that the production was extremely beautiful and that Ribeirinho did a splendid job in designing the way the characters evolved on stage, but in his opinion this first Portuguese *Twelfth Night* ended up being no more than an "entertainment" and an "irresponsible amusement" of a "gentle irrelevance". The critic gave as examples of the way the production changed the original "proportions" of Shakespeare's play both the underplaying of the pivotal role of Orsino and the farcical approach to Malvolio, played by Ribeirinho himself:

As for Malvolio, he is not a ridiculous character, but instead is subjected to ridicule, because he is the only serious person, in the bourgeois and puritanical sense of the word, that exists in the play. [He is] the ambitious steward, severe and master of himself, possessed by rectitude, a precursor of Tartufe and of Cromwell. (*Ibidem*)

Many years later, Costa Ferreira, the actor then playing the role of Sir Toby Belch, would write in his autobiography, *Uma Casa com Janelas para Dentro* (1985), something that somehow confirmed Sena's objection:

It's obvious that the ambiguous sexual games in the play were made more subtle by Ribeiro's intelligent direction, to placate the censor, the same way that the social meaning of Malvolio, played by Ribeiro himself, was partially drowned in pure comicality, just as the sensuality of Sir Toby Belch (preparation for Falstaff) had to take place relatively far away from the sexual organs of Maria. (Ferreira 380)

Sena agreed that the production had valuable and positive dimensions, particularly due to the balance and competence expressed by its visual dimension—the sets designed by the experienced José Barbosa and the costumes by Abílio Matos Silva, even though these were perhaps a little "too ornate"—and to the homogeneous and

talented work developed by some of the actors, particularly Eunice Munõz, whom the critic credits as having been capable, due to her “exceptional intuition”, of embodying the “melancholic poetry that is the atmosphere of the play in its authenticity”. But Sena was also particularly critical of the fact that the songs originally attributed to Feste were in that production sung by a female troubadour: not only some of “the most beautiful lyrics of universal poetry” were turned into “miserable verse, better placed in a revue in Parque Mayer”, but also the songs were “howled” by that female troubadour “masked as a tamed bear”.

One of the most interesting moments of Jorge de Sena’s acerbic review is when he considers the quality of Francisco Ribeiro’s direction, introducing a demand that goes a bit further than the competence and the values of “unity” and “homogeneity” praised by all the others reviewers:

And it also comes as no surprise that there isn’t in the direction of the production by Ribeirinho, brilliant and ingenious as it is (and in some ways easy, because the text could be whatever he wanted it to be), a guiding idea, a meaning of the play. Because to direct is not only to build proficiently, and with a felicity we have to acknowledge, a beautiful and amusing performance; it is, above all, to *interpret* a text. (Sena 170)

What Jorge de Sena would like to see reflected in that production of *Twelfth Night* was something that the Portuguese theatre of the time was only timidly starting to offer, but that Francisco Ribeiro, respected as he already was, couldn’t possibly achieve. Ribeiro had begun his career in 1929 in the Company of Chaby Pinheiro, one of the actors that had still worked in the celebrated company Rosas & Brazão at the end of the nineteenth century. Later he collaborated with other companies of actor-managers like Alves da Cunha-Berta Bivar, Santanela-Amarante and Maria Matos-Mendonça de Carvalho. Having started directing in 1935, when he was only twenty four, Ribeiro soon achieved

a large popularity, also due to his participation in films, and a noticeable respectability that granted him the direction of Teatro do Povo, a touring theatre company created by the Government to bring idealized images of the Portuguese identity to the rural areas of our country. He contributed to the more than necessary renewal of the repertoire, namely when he worked in the company Comediantes de Lisboa, where he premièred plays by Shaw, Giradoux, Tolstoi, Alfredo Cortez, and he also introduced other methodologies in the process of staging a play, largely influenced by the experience of Jacques Copeau, at the Vieux-Colombier, in Paris, and of the French *Cartel*, the association created in 1927 by the directors Gaston Baty, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet and Georges Pitoëff, who commonly practised a new understanding of the concept of *mise en scène* (cf. Ferreira 119).

Fernando Gusmão, the actor who played Sir Andrew Aguecheek in the 1957 *Twelfth Night*, recalls in his memoirs both the novelties introduced by Ribeirinho in the Portuguese theatre and his limitations. Acknowledging him (together with António Pedro) as the master of his generation of actors, Gusmão offers a characterisation of Ribeiro's work as a director: that he was extremely organized, disciplined and demanding, but also limited to an understanding of *mise en scène* still too much attached to the design of the actors' movements across the stage, unaware of many contemporary European practical and theoretical developments in the art of theatre directing (cf. Gusmão 111-123 *passim*).

Coincidentally, *Twelfth Night* had been the play chosen by Jacques Copeau for the opening of the mythical Vieux-Colombier, in October 1913, with a stylized setting designed by Louis Jouvet. That production was itself strongly influenced by an English one, directed by Harley Granville-Barker, in 1912, with a thoroughly integrated and symbolic design, by Norman Wilkinson—which was in its turn a reaction against Hawes Craven's pictorial design for Herbert Beerbohm Tree's production of the same play in 1901. Although far from the modernist challenges of Copeau/Jouvet and Barker/Wilkinson, José Barbosa's sets and, particularly, Abílio Matos Silva's "historical" and decorative

costumes were no longer illustrative, as if poised hesitantly between different traditions and strategies .

The fact that Ribeirinho chose this Shakespearean play for the opening production of a new company, one of the very few subsidized by the Portuguese government—called Teatro Nacional Popular, after the name of the company launched by Jean Vilar, at Chaillot, in 1951, the Théâtre National Populaire—is a fact not to be missed in the consideration of the complex and hesitant developments of the visual and interpretative qualities of Portuguese theatre practice in the middle of the twentieth century. With all the misgivings penetratingly identified by Sena, this production signals an effort by some Portuguese theatre artists to get in tune with wider developments. What is perhaps more important to stress is that Shakespearean drama seems to have played an important role here, similar to the one it had played at the end of the nineteenth century with the productions of *Othello* (1882) and *Hamlet* (1887) by the company Rosas & Brazão.

Two years after that first Portuguese production of *Twelfth Night*, the same play was presented in Lisbon, on a single night, again by an English company, the Oxford Playhouse, at the Auditório da Tapada da Ajuda. This performance had the support of several organisations and was part of the cultural programme of the Fair for British Industries, in Lisbon. Jorge de Sena who, as he notes, was one of the few persons to attend the performance, praised the “discreet graciousness and the rhythmic elegance” of the interpretation of the text as well as the maintenance of a level of “high comedy”, in opposition to the violent contrasts between farcical and melodramatic moments in the Teatro Nacional Popular production (Sena 252).

In 1964, the year of the fourth centenary of Shakespeare’s birth, another English production of *Twelfth Night* visited Portugal, this time by The New Shakespeare Company, fully supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, with presentations in Lisbon, Coimbra and Porto. The production was then characterised by the critic Carlos Porto as “not exceptional”, but as representing “the result of a theatrical organization integrated in the realities of our time. There we could see

theatre—that is, a form of artistic expression—and not a mystification. Compared to this production, everything or almost everything in our theatre seems heavy, ungraceful, pedantic, and uncharacteristic" (Porto 94-5). Another Portuguese staging of this same play is due to an amateur group from Madeira, the Grupo Experimental de Teatro do Funchal, that in 1978 worked with a foreign director, Leopold Kielanowski, programmed for the reopening of the local Teatro Municipal.

During the four last decades of the twentieth century, many other Shakespearean comedies never before produced in Portugal or in Portuguese finally attracted the attention of our artists: that was the case of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1960, 1990, 2002), *Measure for Measure* (1964, 1977, 1997, 2002), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1978, 2001), *The Comedy of Errors* (1994, 1998), and *All's Well that Ends Well* (1994, 1999). Other comedies previously produced kept being staged by Portuguese companies or chosen by foreign ones in their visits to Portugal, namely *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002), and *The Merchant of Venice* (1964, 2001, 2002).⁴

Twelfth Night reappeared in 1998, produced by the Teatro Nacional S. João, with a new translation by António Feijó, and directed by Ricardo Pais, a prestigious theatre director whose artistic career began in 1975, the year after the Portuguese revolution. One way to approach this production is to inquire how far it conformed to the characterisation offered by Anthony Davies of the trajectory followed by *Twelfth Night's* post-Restoration stage history: "from unfashionably whimsical trifle to happy romantic comedy to bittersweet drama of social and sexual identity" (493). The programme for this production included an extensive interview with the director, in which Ricardo Pais offered some explanations concerning not only the choice of the play—and the choice of a Shakespeare play appears presented as a natural item in the repertoire of a national theatre—but also its place in the group of plays previously produced at that theatre, having as a common denominator "theatrical unreality" and "the historical use of mechanisms for disguise in the theatre" (Pais 1998). It comes as no surprise that one of the passages

from the play used for promoting the production was Orsino's reaction when, near the end of the play, he finally sees Cesario/Viola and Sebastian: "One face, one voice, and two persons, // A natural perspective, that is and is not" (5.1.209-210).

Both in that interview and in others that the director granted to newspapers, Pais clarified that what attracted him in the play was the theme of the passing of time and the ephemeral or fleeting quality of beauty. What we have here is a kind of dislocation of what would appear as the more currently obvious choices in terms of a hermeneutical approach to *Twelfth Night*. But as the director was careful enough to stress in another interview: "to say that the theme of the play is the inescapable and irreducible quality of time is only to say something—to find the most synthetic motive, however polymorphic and rich in possibilities it may be" (Pais qtd. in Cruz). What he is suggesting is that his job is already beyond the identification or selection of an "interpretation", as Jorge de Sena demanded from Ribeirinho in 1958, thus revealing a direct concern with all the different choices and hazards of a work that takes place and acquires meaning on stage and a deep awareness of the "radical contingency of performance".

Instead of giving an idea of the many different contents of the newspapers articles announcing the production and of the reviews published after its opening, I'll just quote the revealing titles used by journalists and reviewers, convinced that they are sufficient evidence of the renewed expectations and perspectives of more informed theatregoers regarding either that Shakespeare's comedy or that particular production: "Shakespeare in a State of Grace" (Morais 1998); "Games of Appearances" (Anon. 1998a: 29); "To Be or Not To Be Man or Woman" (Pacheco 1998); "Real/Royal Comedy" (Peres 1998); "Laughter and Subversion" (Oliveira 1998b). ; "Shakespeare in Pop Rhythm" (Anon. 1998b); "A Technique of Errors and the Reality of Illusions" (Borges 1998: 43); "Comedy of Errors" (Faria 1998: 31); "Shakespeare's Travesties" (A., P. D. 1998); "In the Kingdom of Ambiguity" (Anon. 1998c); "The Gift of the Word" (Laima 1998);

"Carnavalesque Extravaganza" (Gomes 1998); "Glorious Night" (Carneiro 1998); "A Dazzling Production" (Lívio 1998).

I would like now to concentrate briefly on some aspects of that production that not only clearly represent a more contemporary understanding of the art of *mise en scène*, but also reveal more elusive ways of building meaning on the stage, sometimes going against the declared intents of the ultimate author of the performance, the director. Although Pais had suggested a reduced interest in the social tensions and sexual undercurrents raised by this comedy, the truth is, as Francesca Rayner already demonstrated in a penetrating reading of that production, that by turning Feste, the clown, into a more central character, this Portuguese production transferred sexual ambiguity from the main characters to that of Feste (cf. Rayner *passim*).

Pais seems to have explored both the varied resources of the actor playing Feste, João Reis (the same actor that in 2002 would be playing Hamlet) and the quality of this clown as "a detached, ironic commentator on the play whose freelance status and penchant for puns mirror the elusiveness of language and desire themselves" (Davies 493). Moreover, as the professional singer called upon to perform for others, Feste and his songs end up occupying a unique place in the erotic exchanges in the play. The director even went as far as travestyng that clown and giving him a song written and composed by the androgynous David Bowie, suggestively titled "Time", presented as "the most beautiful song ever written on the condition of the actor" (Pais: 1998): "Time - He's waiting in the wings // He speaks of senseless things // His script is you and me, boy // Time - He flexes like a whore // Falls wanking to the floor // His trick is you and me, boy." If it is true that this type of gesture may have helped to broaden the public appeal of the production, it is no less true that it also generated more sophisticated negotiations between body and sexuality, something that is at the heart of the theatrical magic of most of Shakespeare's comedies and particularly *Twelfth Night*.

The music that is "the food of love", in Orsino's opening words, appeared in "excess" throughout the performance, combining David

Bowie's "Time" and nineteenth-century Saint-Saëns' "Une Flute Invisible" with original music and songs written by the Portuguese avant-garde composer Vítor Rua, and assuming thematic significance, as an expression of both desire and death, capable even of disrupting the final harmony between the masculine and the feminine. One of those songs, "Come Away Death" (2.4) embodied more directly the questions of gender and sexuality that traverse the play, reinforced by the post-punk look of Feste wearing a coat over a dress, thus introducing a note of gender ambiguity. In fact, both the music and the costumes adopted an eclectic strategy, crossing universes and historical periods.

The set designed by António Lagarto was a vast and open space, temporarily inhabited by two semi-circular benches that functioned as sofas, kneeling-desks, bars, promontories and alcoves, and at the same time metaphorically suggesting the two genders, male and female. When closed—and they appeared in a closed circle only at the beginning and end of the performance—these two benches also evoked a kind of miniature of the open-air theatres of Shakespeare's time. The vast space of the stage was sometimes divided by a framed curtain of gauze that with the use of light could be made transparent or opaque, thus adding new significances to the games of identities in which the characters are involved in the course of play.

This production of *Twelfth Night*, so briefly sketched here, goes partially against a more literary understanding of the signification of a stage performance, in a clear demonstration that, in W. B. Worthen's words:

[Stage meanings] are not translatable from the text, because meaning in the theatre arises from the application of productive practices to the text—behaviour, scenic design, lighting, movement, the full panoply of institutionalized theatre practice—that stand outside and beyond the text. (...) Stage production does more than merely evoke, enunciate, or complete the text; it re-presents the text in a variety of incommensurable visual, embodied, kinetic discourses. (Worthen 51-52)

The director remains as the functional place for us to attribute the generation of meaning, its authenticator, but in theatrical practices where there is such an assumed autonomy in the dialogue between different creative languages, the "unruly ways of the stage" are clearly brought to the foreground. And this is what I'm convinced the theatre director Ricardo Pais was thinking when he provocatively described his work as "licentious" and "frivolous". On one hand, it could be correctly said that Pais still adheres to the modernist ideal of the theatre director as a mediator, a manager of the formidable possibilities of a text otherwise too distant in time, language and thought; on the other hand, many of his post-modern experiments reveal him as exploring the play less from a linguistic or literary point of view, and instead more imaginatively focused on the visual elements of performance and more deliberately committed to "change all the proportions" of the dramatic fiction read on the page, thus demonstrating *Twelfth Night's* inexhaustible theatrical qualities.

Notes

1. A first version of this text was presented at the roundtable "Staging Shakespeare in Portugal", convened by Maria Helena Serôdio, within the international conference *Gloriana's Rule: The Life, Literature and Culture of Elizabethan England*, organized by the Department of Anglo-American Studies, Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto, at the Teatro do Campo Alegre, Porto, Portugal, 5-7 June 2003. I would like to express my gratitude to the research assistance of Rui Pina Coelho, from the Centre of Theatre Studies, University of Lisbon.
2. All translation into English is the author's own.
3. I should add that this enthusiasm was reinforced by the fact that in that same week the company working at the National Theatre in Lisbon, Amélia Rey Colaço-Robles Monteiro, had just premièred an acclaimed production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, a play that could be understood as an indirect commentary on the Portuguese authoritarian and censorious regime of the period.
4. For further information, see the CETBase: <http://www.fl.ul.pt/CETbase/default.htm>.

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