

Early Modern Literary Studies

***Twelfth Night*, presented by Shakespeare's Globe at the Apollo Theatre, London,
2nd November 2012 to 9th February 2013.**

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Directed by Tim Carroll. Assistant directed by Oscar Toeman. Designed by Jenny Tiramani. Lighting by David Plater. Music and arrangements by Clare van Kampen. With Liam Brennan (Orsino), Ben Thompson (Curio/Officer/servant), Ian Drysdale (Valentine/Priest), Johnny Flynn (Viola), Jethro Skinner (Captain/Officer), Colin Hurley (Sir Toby Belch), Paul Chahidi (Maria), Roger Lloyd Pack (Sir Andrew Aguecheek), Peter Hamilton Dyer (Feste), Mark Rylance (Olivia), Stephen Fry (Malvolio), John Paul Connolly (Antonio), Samuel Barnett (Sebastian), James Gannon (Fabian).

Many productions of *Twelfth Night* in recent years have focused on the more troublesome aspects of the play, in particular the rapid marrying-off of Orsino and Viola, and Olivia and Sebastian, despite Orsino's previous devotion to Olivia, and the fact that she barely knows Sebastian. For example, David Farr's 2012 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company went so far as to cut the marriage of the play's one well-matched couple, Sir Toby Belch and Maria - excising the single line 'in recompense whereof he hath married her' (5.1.364) - in pursuit of a sense of unease and discomfort at its end. However, Tim Carroll's production for the Globe, now transferred to the indoor Apollo Theatre, rejected this sense of unease and opted instead for presenting the Orsino/Viola relationship as an unlikely, but convincing romance. A revival of Carroll's 2002 production (which toured the USA in 2003) with Mark Rylance, Paul Chahidi and Liam Brennan reprising their roles as Olivia, Maria and Orsino respectively, the production followed the Globe's 'original practices' model, with an all-male cast, Elizabethan staging practices and period costumes. Throughout the play, the attraction between Orsino and Caesario was emphasised, played for a comic effect which was enhanced by the all-male casting, and by a somewhat Stuart aesthetic to the costumes, which allowed Viola and Sebastian to display equally long curls, emphasising the femininity of both.

The body language of Brennan and Johnny Flynn (Viola) during Feste's song 'Come away, come away death' (2.4) spoke to a deeply confused and conflicted Orsino, whose anger later in the play was clearly caused by, and at least partly directed at, his own emotions. It is easy for a production of *Twelfth Night* to focus on the more immediately comic activities in the home of Olivia, leaving Orsino as a somewhat immature and effete man whose friendship with Caesario is more remarked upon by others than witnessed on stage. Here, however, we had an Orsino whose final declaration was made in the full knowledge of how much his 'man' loved him; he had been shocked by the fervour with which Caesario offered to die for him at his hand, as he threatened to take revenge for the presumed marriage. The revelation of Viola's true nature was a relief and a pleasure for this Orsino. There was no remaining longing in his reconciliation with Olivia; when she proposed she should be a 'sister' rather than a wife, their handshake was almost business-like in its embarrassment.

In Rylance's Olivia, we had a woman who initially appeared as if she would be a good match for her pompous and proper steward, Malvolio (Stephen Fry). Quiet and prim, she was almost without emotion or reaction, despite her grieving state. Carroll had all the 'women' of the cast move with tiny steps, almost Geisha-like, which combined with the Elizabethan costumes to create an impression of gliding, rather than walking. To turn around they had to walk in a small circle, as Elizabethan women must have had to, to ensure the passage of their skirts. Rylance took this to the extreme. At the beginning of the play, Rylance depicted Olivia as confined by her state, and by her clothes. She barely moved and required assistance to be seated in her chair, to which she was recalled by Malvolio's admonitory cough when she stood up and walked about. Her response to Feste's catechising was restrained and sad. The strong white, black and red make up, recalling Queen Elizabeth I, to modern eyes also recalled the Geisha; it created a mask behind which Olivia was initially hidden.

In this production, therefore, the love for Caesario which overwhelms Olivia was an emancipatory force which enabled her to escape the confines, self-imposed or not, which surrounded her. Physically her movements became larger, her face more expressive, and her voice louder and more expressive. She went from requiring help to sit on a chair to laying herself seductively down on a blanket (unfortunately for her marred by the entry of the yellow-stockinged, cross-gartered Malvolio). In her first speech to Sebastian, Olivia was so overexcited that the delivery was done without breath, quicker and fainter until she was overcome and fainted gracefully on stage. When Sebastian finally gave her the answer she had been waiting for from his twin, she launched herself at him, a moment of excess that left red lipstick smeared over his face. It was in this scene that the fundamental lack of connection on Sebastian's part was

illustrated, as he took the opportunity to muse that he must be dreaming, rather than rush to the aid of the noblewoman who had just declared love and then collapsed. However, at the denouement, Sebastian was clearly concerned for the woman who had just realised her mistake, and treated her with gentleness and kindness. Olivia's exclamation 'Most wonderful!' as she saw the twins side by side was not as innuendo-laden as in some productions, and instead illustrated the extent to which she has been freed, as she physically jumped on the speech, only to be overcome with embarrassment a second later.

This production rightly (given its interpretation) played down the homoerotic element of Sebastian's relationship with Antonio, which enabled the sudden conversion of Sebastian to Olivia's husband to seem, if rather hasty, not entirely unrealistic. Indeed, given the joyful and loving reunion of the twins, it was clear that this Sebastian would be kind to Olivia, despite her mistake; it was a match perhaps made in haste, but not necessarily to be repented at leisure.