

## Goodbye Wave: Trevor Nunn's Twelfth Night – A

### Maritime Valediction

The small hushed waves' repeated fresh collapse / Up the warm yellow sand (Larkin 9)

For much of modern culture, the sea cannot be represented; it is too large for history, too vast for culture, too fluid for any stable meaning. (Mentz 2)

The deployment of maritime settings is conspicuous in the works of Shakespeare from the earliest plays such as The Comedy of Errors to the late romances which are almost inundated (from the Latin word unda, meaning “wave”) by the presence of the sea. Shakespeare's employment of the oceanic ranges from the sudden and unexpected emotional intensity of Antipholus of Syracuse seeking his twin brother: “I to the world am like a drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop” (1.2.35-6), to the benevolent mysticism of Prospero's storm ironically solving political wrangles and fraternal disputes. In Antony and Cleopatra it offers the ill-fated theatre of war which Antony's soldiers urge him to avoid: “O noble Emperor, do not fight by sea” (3.7.61), while its malevolence is also felt in the “Contagious fogs” which the winds “As in revenge have sucked up from the sea” (2.1.88-90) in A Midsummer Night's Dream. But in Hamlet, the sea is less malignant, providing as it does a far-fetched narrative convenience as the Prince's doomed voyage to England is waylaid by pirates thus saving the protagonist's life for the play's final act and contradicting Hamlet's earlier accusatory

image: “sea of troubles” (3.1.61). As Ferdinand concedes at the end of The Tempest, “Though the seas threaten, they are merciful” (5.1.181).

The swimming contest between Julius Caesar and Cassius offers valuable evidence of the human vulnerabilities which undermine the emperor's apparent immortality (1.2.102-17) while later it provides Brutus with a compelling image to push on towards Philippi: “There is a tide in the affairs of men / Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune / [...] On such a full sea are we now afloat, / And we must take the current when it serves” (4.2.270-5). In King John and Othello the sea obliges with much needed protection by wrecking, almost casually, enemy fleets and in Richard II it is mythologised into “the silver sea” protecting the Edenic realm “as a moat defensive to a house” (2.1.46-9). In Pericles it supplies geographical range and emotional tension in the storm as well as the maritime birthplace for the play's saving grace, Marina, while in The Merchant of Venice it acts as an off-stage threat, the vicissitudes of which can make or break – with headlong cussedness – the fortunes of its merchant adventurers by returning safely or dashing to ruin their treasured argosies (3.1.3).

Gloucester's attempted suicide comprises throwing himself, seawards, off the cliffs of Dover. The fact that he survives is testament to both the imaginative vigour of the setting and its non-existence. No more than the horses or armies of Agincourt can the sea be presented on the stage at the Globe yet, no less in puissance is its narrative, symbolic, geographical, emotional and theatrical grip on the imagination of Warwickshire's landlocked playwright.

Perhaps more than any other play, Twelfth Night is Shakespeare's maritime masterpiece, and the habitual swapping of the play's first two scenes (as common as not in the contemporary theatre) is indicative of the prominence and importance of its coastal setting. Trevor Nunn's 1996 film version makes just this swap and in doing so signals its allegiance to the play's obsession with the sea. But of equal importance is Nunn's concern with the valedictory and the autumnal. It is as if the film is lamenting the ebbing of youth together with the aristocratic certainties of the Edwardian era.

Nunn identifies the play as "the most autumnal of Shakespeare's comedies" (Screening Shakespeare: Twelfth Night) and in the introduction to his screenplay he writes, "Together we made a film, an autumnal film, about the transience of youth" (16). For Geoff Brown, "Nunn makes autumn the perfect season for the comedy's darker moods" (Times, 24 October 1996). During the film's outdoor scenes the characters' breath can be seen on the misty air and teams of gardeners rake and burn leaves scattered across the lawns. But Nunn's version is autumnal in another sense, it is directly valedictory, taking its leave, as the cliff-top Feste does of us in the film's closing sequence, not just of youth but of the class structures that belong somewhere in Edwardian England. Essentially a romantic comedy, Nunn's film is also a nostalgic farewell, in the mould of Brideshead Revisited, to the aristocratic superiority that peoples Olivia's household with gardeners, maids, butlers and cooks (all of whom we see throughout the film and who come together as spectators to the humiliation of Malvolio). Like a poster for an English Heritage country estate, it is both deeply evocative of the past glories of aristocratic civility as well as insistent on their vanished antiquity. Nunn's

maritime film commemorates a proud but faded England; a geography defined by coast and a history circumscribed by transience. Location and setting reinforce each other as liminal; both geologically and temporally subject to imminent erosion.

Nunn identifies two major distinctions between play and film versions to do with structure and character. In terms of the first, he asserts “that cinematic construction is best served by scenes of brief impact, pushing the narrative forward at all times” (8). Whereas Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night comprises eighteen different scenes; Nunn’s film has 140 (and Supple’s has 98). For Laurie Osborne the succession of “quick cuts” (91) in Nunn’s film should be read in erotic terms as revealing our “investment in character as a complex weave of gender identity and erotic alliance” (106) but for Nunn it sounds rather as though the film’s myriad episodes serve to intensify its narrative thrust: “I made an adaptation of the text which included changing its chronology, reducing it considerably, cross-cutting between incidents to increase both contrast and meaning and, of course, making shorter, more charged scenes” (Laroque 89). The translation from play to film necessitates, according to Michael Hattaway, radical textual reorganisation: “Trevor Nunn’s adaptation of Twelfth Night to a degree made a collage of the text”, and, indeed, Hattaway goes on to insist that such adaptation is unavoidable, “A screenplay’s fidelity to a playtext is likely to be a sign of failure rather than of success” (96).

An example of Nunn’s cross-cutting would be the ingenious reworking of the sequence in which Feste (played by Ben Kingsley) sings O Mistress Mine (2.3.35f, Twelfth Night: A Screenplay 43). In the play, Shakespeare has Feste sing the song to the

pensively capernoited Toby and Andrew who are persuaded of the imminence of their own decline: "Youth's a stuff will not endure" (46). On stage, there is usually a beat or two of melancholy realisation that their sexual peak is long gone and sometimes a tearful recognition of the proximity of their own mortality before Toby's inebriated and stubborn optimism shatters the silence with his determination to "make the welkin dance indeed" (47).<sup>1</sup> Their subsequent revelry leads to Malvolio's entry and furious reprimand. In Nunn's film, the song runs while the scene shifts between several embedded events: Feste sitting cross-legged on the kitchen table singing to Andrew and Toby (Richard E. Grant and Mel Smith) while Maria (Imelda Staunton) stands, looking on, arms folded with an expression of resigned acceptance; Olivia (Helena Bonham Carter), alone in bed, turning restlessly in her sleep, her thoughts disturbed doubtless by the oneiric image of Cesario while, in front of an open fire in Orsino's house, master and servant play cards and smoke, discussing Cesario's attraction to one "Of your complexion" (45). We cut back to the kitchen where Maria has joined in Feste's melody, capturing "the song's subtext of lost love and lost opportunity" (Crowl, Cineplex 82). Toby looks distinctly embarrassed at her thinly veiled entreaty, "Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty", and ashamed at his continued exploitation of her (clearly Toby has been using her as "a piece of Eve's flesh" (23) without the slightest intention of making an honest woman of her). Briefly (so briefly that mention of it does not occur in the screenplay) we cut back to Orsino and Cesario (Toby Stephens and Imogen Stubbs) who regard each other with embarrassed

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<sup>1</sup> Contrast this resignation with the priest's cheerful salvific optimism: "my watch hath told me, toward my grave / I have travelled but two hours." (5.1.158-9, cut from Nunn's film) as well as Viola's blithe confidence in providence: "Time, thou must untangle this not I. / It is too hard a knot for me t'untie" (p. 54, though again cut from the film. Incidentally, Shakespeare's play has "O Time").

half-smiles before returning to the morose Andrew: "A mellifluous voice, as I am true knight" (46).

What Nunn achieves in this sequence of cross-cutting is a poignant contrast between the sexual frustrations of middle age – we are later to see the weeping Maria shut herself in her room after Toby has rejected her invitation "to bed" (51) while Andrew's lament "I was adored once, too" (51) consigns his romantic accomplishment(s) firmly to the past – and the burgeoning carnal amplitude of youth: Olivia writhing and stretching between the sheets, and Orsino and Cesario bonding in homosocial rituals such as snooker, smoking or card playing. Nunn remarked how the sense of simultaneity intensified the reciprocity between the various characters albeit situated, as they are, in different places: "[the sequence] conveyed a sense that these yearning and unrequited relationships existed in two households, that, ironically, these needs for fulfillment [sic] were occurring at one and the same time" (Crowdus 38). But in addition to the concurrency of the events, there is an implicit linearity between them: Toby, Andrew and Maria, even Feste, were young once. The contrast between these cross-cut scenes of spent maturity and flourishing youth along with the omnipresence of Feste's pungent song, leads characters within the film and viewers of it to the realisation that, as Shakespeare puts it in one of his very last plays, "Golden lads and girls all must, / As chimney-sweepers, come to dust" (Cymbeline, 4.2.263-4). For Stephen M. Buhler, this arrangement of shots around Feste's song constitutes "the centrepiece of this autumnal view of the play" (154).

While Nunn's fluency with ~~and tonal fidelity to~~ Shakespeare's text is illustrated in the melancholic reworking of O Mistress Mine, an arrangement which "dislodges the sequence of narration" (Brown 19), it also demonstrates, in its dwelling on each character's desire (Maria's for Toby, Olivia's for Cesario, Cesario's for Orsino, Andrew's for Olivia and perhaps, Feste's for a lost youthfulness), the second of Nunn's distinctions between stage and film Shakespeare. In spite of Nunn's directorship of the RSC and the company's traditional stress on verse speaking, his film of Twelfth Night prioritises a spoken naturalism over a rhetorical formality and this conversational veracity springs from a prioritisation of psychological authenticity.<sup>2</sup> As Nunn remarked, "every word of it is passing through somebody's mind and is being invented by them because of the situations that they're in and absolutely not that the performers are responsible for a previously written text which has to be recited or presented" (Screening Shakespeare). Nunn underlines this affinity between prose and psychological realism: "Shakespeare's prose scenes have an uncanny contemporary feel of real speech [...]. I wanted to stress the naturalism of these scenes [...]. They seem to me to exemplify a genre of truthful comedy" (Screenplay xii). Nearly two-thirds of Twelfth Night is in prose (the exact figure is 61.3%, McDonald 77) and this characteristic facilitates Nunn's emphasis on "truthful" conversational exchange. This notion of rhetorical verisimilitude is frequently remarked upon by the film's commentators: Barbara Hodgdon writes of "the film's prevailing realism" ("Sexual disguise" 189) while Ann Jennalie Cook talks of its "air of

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Many of Nunn's acting company in this film are RSC veterans: Nicholas Farrell, Nigel Hawthorne, Ben Kingsley, Imelda Staunton, Toby Stephens and Imogen Stubbs.

authenticity” and goes on to describe the way Nunn “enhances the credibility of an improbable plot [...] by drenching it in [...] realism” (86).<sup>3</sup>

This quality of plausibility is frequently linked, in theatrical terms, to the naturalism of Chekhov. Kenneth Rothwell asserts that Nunn's Twelfth Night “shares a bitter-sweet melancholy and nostalgia with Uncle Vanya and The Cherry Orchard” (227). Hodgdon proposes that “the film's most obvious debt is to Chekhov's hermetic, hot-house worlds” and she finds in the film's finale a quality which marks it “as a substitute for the Shakespearean (or Chekhovian) Twelfth Night he has never staged” (“Wooing” 251-2, 254). Samuel Crowl suggests that Nunn's “Twelfth Night finds its inspiration more in Chekhov and Mozart than in the world of film” (Cineplex 79). In 2007 when Nunn contributed to the RSC's Complete Works Festival, he directed Ian McKellen as King Lear in a production which toured the world for nearly two years. The same company performed Shakespeare's play in repertory with The Seagull, further evidence of Nunn's perspective on the connections between the two playwrights. Indeed Nunn himself has remarked upon the ways in which Twelfth Night “runs a gamut from the comic things that we are quite close to in Carry On films [note his farcical arrangement of the duel between Andrew and Cesario] right the way through to the sort of effects that we associate with a work like Uncle Vanya or The Cherry Orchard” (Screening Shakespeare). One of the clearest consequences of this Chekhovian shift towards naturalism is to move the emphasis from the social fabric of Shakespeare's story to the

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<sup>3</sup> Compare Shakespeare's own anticipation of the accusation of Twelfth Night's narrative implausibility when he has Fabian say, “If this were played upon a stage, now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction” (3.4.125).



studied accent on individual characters and their crises of desire, autonomy and especially identity.

Identity is conspicuously present in Nunn's interpolated back-story with which the film opens. Nunn reverses the first two scenes in order to provide the film with a powerful initial sequence in addition to, as Keir Elam points out, "foregrounding Viola's agency" (Shakespeare 97). But Nunn goes further back than the opening ship-wreck, adding a scene on board a boat in which two veiled women (one seated at a piano and the other accompanying her on a concertina) sing O Mistress Mine to a group of amused passengers including Antonio who regards them with sensual concern: "the way Nicholas Farrell plays him, Antonio's face is almost a study in longing for Sebastian" (Patricia 163). Carol Chillington Rutter's account captures the recital's vertiginous confusions:

We read them as women. Until mid-way through the soprano chorus of "O mistress mine" they "sing both high and low", and "low" booms out in a bass voice! Which of them is the man? Which of them does Antonio desire? Eyes narrowing, the piano-playing twin moves to unmask the impersonator, pulling aside the first twin's veil to expose what's underneath. A moustache! Frowning, that former "she" (now written "he") reciprocates, pulls aside the second twin's veil, and discloses – another moustache.

(249)

The masculine manifestation of facial hair usurps the initial signifier of demure femininity in the yashmak so that what we (and the on-ship audience) take to be two women become two men until the standing twin grasps and tugs off the stick-on moustache of the other. The revelation of the "real" sex causes an audience gasp and

laughter: this then is finally a woman. But the female twin instantly reaches up to the other's moustache and it appears that "she" too will be revealed to be other than "he" appears. This mutual exposé adumbrates the various instances of Olivia being unveiled (see below). With a terrible pitch and crunch the ship runs onto rocks and the performance is immediately lost as laughter turns to shouts and screams. During the shipwreck sequence, Nunn has a voice-over "declaiming a bad pseudo-Shakespearean blank-verse prologue" (Shakespeare 118) which explains that Messaline and Illyria are at war with each other (and so neatly accounts for the enmity between Orsino and Antonio).<sup>4</sup>

The twins' unmasking sequence raises several obvious and related motifs to do with identity and disguise (not only Viola as Cesario but Antonio as a padre and Feste as Sir Topas, not to mention the episode of Malvolio donning the latest, as he takes them to be, fashions). But it raises another less overt though germane trope to do with the connection between hair and sexuality which is to figure prominently in Nunn's film. Viola will reattach her fake moustache as part of her disguise as a page; Toby's gruff masculinity is hinted at by his lamb-chop whiskers; the unkempt Antonio sports several days' growth as a result, presumably, of sleeping rough which contrasts with the tidy goatee and dashing moustache of Orsino (whose fastidious personal grooming is documented in a sequence in which we see him bathing).<sup>5</sup> Feste's sternly shaven head contrasts vividly with the floppy fringed Andrew and Malvolio's toupee is a source of

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Elam's irritation was anticipated by Nunn himself. In a 1999 interview he said: "I did several things I'm sure would mortify some scholars. I introduced a prologue because it was discovered that audiences were having some difficulty in orienting themselves and in discovering exactly who these twins were" (Crowdus 38).

constant humiliation and comedy. As the steward, played by Nigel Hawthorne, returns the ring to Orsino's messenger, for instance, Cesario's "attention has been caught by the wind tugging at what is now revealed as MALVOLIO's toupee" (Screenplay 36). At the climax of Malvolio's mortification, Feste comes downstairs amid the serried ranks of household retainers, "passing all those congregated, to the floor level, where everyone can see he is wearing MALVOLIO's toupee" (129). Perhaps most tellingly we witness the brutal shearing of Viola's long blonde hair as she affects her "masculine usurped attire" (123) while her bare face prompts Feste's barbed "Now Jove, in his next commodity of hair, send thee a beard" (65), an invocation which suggests that he is fully aware of the woman behind the hairless chin.

Viola's process of disguise takes us through the film's title sequence as we see her bandaging her breasts tight against her torso, deliberately straining her voice to achieve the lower tones of a male register and stuffing a handkerchief down the front of her trousers in order to affect a phallic bulge. Repeatedly the disguised Viola is required to conduct herself as a swaggering man within the testosterone-filled world of Orsino's court which is rendered all the more exclusively male by Nunn's giving an additional line to the Captain (played by Sid Livingstone) as he is explaining to Viola who governs here (1.2): "'Tis said no woman may approach his court" (although the line does not appear in the published Screenplay).<sup>6</sup> Viola's desire to affect a macho identity results in her fearfully riding horses at a gallop, smoking and gagging on big cigars, belting down

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<sup>5</sup> On the bathing sequence, Anthony Guy Patricia remarks: "That Cesario desires Orsino here is unmistakable in what qualifies as one of the most overtly homoerotic moments in all of Nunn's film" (100).

<sup>6</sup> It appears that Nunn has lifted and tailored for his purposes this line from Love's Labour's Lost in which the Princess remarks upon the exclusive masculinity of Navarre's academy: "No woman may approach his silent court" (2.1.24).

alcohol and backslapping her peers, though at one point she overplays her hand, knocking the wounded Orsino back onto his injured arm, supported in a sling. We see her in a fencing academy gingerly removing her tutor's supporting hand from her chest lest her breasts give the game away. As Nunn put it:

I was most emphatically not interested in the page boy Viola I have often seen, cherubic with long, girly hair, padded doublet, codpiece, decorated pantaloons, heeled shoes and still enjoying the femininity of lace cuffs and ruffs. Such a Cesario I felt would be costing Viola very little (Screenplay xi).

The effort Nunn requires of Viola in maintaining her disguise is explicit as, sighing in the privacy of her attic room, we see her unwinding her bandaged body and revert to her undisguised femininity, pondering the photograph of her brother and the problems caused by her assumption of multiple identities: "As I am man, / My state is desperate for my master's love. / As I am woman, now, alas the day [cut to sleeping Olivia] / What thriftless sighs will [for the text's "shall"] poor Olivia breathe!" (53). At these moments, Crowl observes pruriently, "Nunn's camera richly caresses the pert and ripe profile of Stubbs" ("Review" 37).<sup>7</sup> Masculine disguise is thus a constraint for Viola as her female curves are literally straight-jacketed in to the buttoned-up military uniform of Cesario. The removal of the faux moustache in the recital sequence (see above) is nicely reiterated during the final revelation of her female identity at the film's conclusion: "SEBASTIAN reaches out his hand and with the same precision as before he takes the end of the moustache and peels it off" (123).

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<sup>7</sup> Rothwell uses the same adjective writing of Cesario's "pert but unadorned military tunic" (228).

Influential upon Nunn, according to his foreword to the Screenplay, was John Barton's 1969 RSC production of Twelfth Night. Nunn writes, "drawing all disparate elements together was the omnipresent sea, audible in its ceaseless ebb and flow throughout and becoming the salve for all wounds, its 'salt waves fresh in love'" (vii). The film's Cornwall location keeps the play's pelagic environment close to the surface. Not only is the sea given prominence by the opening shot of the boat being tossed on the waves and the episode of the twins' musical entertainment below decks but, following the sinking, the submerged twins orbit one another while their clothes and Viola's as yet uncut hair swell between and behind them, giving them the appearance of ghosts. As they identify one another at the play's climax, Viola talks of her brother going "to his watery tomb" (122) and accuses her doppelgänger of being a "spirit". Sebastian answers, "A spirit I am indeed, / But am in that dimension grossly clad / Which from the womb I did participate" (5.1.234-6, though cut from the film). The proximity and rhyme of "tomb" and "womb" is craftily Shakespearean, rooting in phonetically twinned words the oxymoronic ideas of death and life (compare the poet's thoughts sepulchred in his brain, "Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew" Sonnet, 86.4).<sup>8</sup> Although Sebastian's beautiful lines do not survive as far as the film's final cut, they float somewhere in the background and transmute what appears to be a drowning into an image of the twins billowing over one another in the amniotic fluid of the sea's womb: the Screenplay describes the pair at this point as "embryos" (6). As Crowl writes of the sea in Nunn's film, it is "subtly associated with Viola / Cesario, who comes up out of the sea to bring

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At 2.1.20, Sebastian talks of how Antonio has rescued him, pulling him "from the breach of the sea". While both Oxford and Arden editions gloss breach as "surf", the word also means "vagina". The idea is of Antonio delivering Sebastian from the womb of the sea.

both emotional disturbance and spiritual balance to the tale's protagonists" ("Review" 37).

In the aftermath of this unhappy wreck, we see Viola and the crew, amid a jumble of flotsam, including the mangled keyboard of the piano (we are later to see Cesario playing piano for the supine Orsino), scramble from the rollers onto the shore of Illyria. In the film's opening sequence, Viola is another Marina, symbolically if not literally "born at sea" (Pericles, 12.13 and 21.145). As she laments her drowned twin, Shakespeare's play has Viola say "O my poor brother – and so perchance may he be [saved]" (1.2.6). Nunn cuts the latter part of the line and has Viola "run in despair back into the sea" (8). Though prevented by the Captain, Nunn's Viola attempts to wade back into the waves to reunite herself with Sebastian if not in birth, then in death.

Relentlessly Nunn maintains this maritime focus. Feste watches the doomed party make their way up onto the beach from a cliff-top vantage point (it is this moment which explains why Feste alone is not deceived by Viola's masculine disguise), the Captain shields Viola in a beachfront cave from the prying eyes of Orsino's malevolent cavalry, Cesario practices his manly voice to the waves, out-shouting the surf like Demosthenes, and converses with Orsino on an outcrop jutting into the water. As unfortunate go-between, the page is forced to walk between the houses of Orsino and Olivia along cliff-top paths which allow a painful panorama of what s/he takes to be Sebastian's final resting place. The shots of St Michael's Mount with its tide-bound

causeway insist on the cussedness of the sea, its indifference to the plight of lovers, servants, siblings.

Even when we are not actually on the beach, the sea is never far away. Malvolio practises “behaviour to his own shadow” (2.5.16) in a grotto containing a statue of a naked Venus (celebrated in Botticelli’s mythological The Birth of Venus as the most iconic of all seashore deliveries) which is set against a niche elaborately inlaid with sea-shells. This visual seascape flows from the maritime obsession of Twelfth Night itself and even though not all the play’s references to the sea find their way as far as the final cut, Nunn’s aquatic empathy with Shakespeare’s play is an important part of its effect. For instance, Orsino compares his desire to the all-consuming sea on several occasions (1.1.11, Screenplay 14 though it is cut from the final film version and at 2.4.99, also cut from the film). Maria, attempting to repulse the unwanted Cesario, banter with him in naval mode: “Will you hoist sail, sir? Here lies your way”, to which Cesario surges back with the impudent rejoinder, “No, good swabber, I am to hull here a little longer” (30). Feste determines that “men of such constancy” as Orsino be “put to sea” (77 though cut from the film) and Orsino addresses his enemy, Antonio, as “Notable pirate, thou salt-water thief” (114).

In addition to the visualisation of the text’s images of the sea, there is clearly a direct cinematic allusion to the vertiginous heights of the battlements whence Laurence Olivier’s Hamlet regards the frenzied waves beneath him (Olivier). Twelfth Night’s fixation with madness and disguise make it an obvious comic counterpart to

Shakespeare's greatest tragedy – Hamlet and Twelfth Night were, in all probability, written in the same year. For Nunn the two plays are closely related, literary twins, as it were: “we have to remember that this is the play that Shakespeare wrote immediately before Hamlet, very much in the middle of his writing lifetime when his concerns were becoming more and more dark and serious” (Laroque 89).

Set against the elemental magnificence of the rolling sea, is the crepuscular world of Olivia's household, shrouded in veils and drapes. The rooms of Llanhydrock are shielded from the sun by long, thick curtains. Olivia is first glimpsed in her brother's funeral procession. Here as well as her first meeting with Feste and of course her initial encounter with Cesario, she is veiled. Olivia herself recognises the analogy between drape and veil; as she reveals her face to Cesario she playfully talks of herself as a portrait: “we will draw the curtain and show you the picture” (30). In order to get a better look at her, “CESARIO suddenly pulls open the window curtain nearby – OLIVIA squints, but recovers her composure as the daylight floods in” (31). In Great Expectations, Pip recollects his meeting Miss Havisham and remarks on her aversion to daylight: “I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust” (Dickens 90). There is in Olivia's household the same determination to shun radiance as she immures herself in her mourning rituals while those around Olivia are constantly urging her towards the light. Feste draws her veil to prove her a fool, Sebastian lifts it to kiss her face and Toby's impatience with her self-indulgent grief – “What a plague means my niece to take the death of her brother thus!” – causes him to “tug at the curtains letting more and more



light stream into the room" (21). It is therefore significant that as a servant announces Cesario's arrival he enters through the French windows while their subsequent conversation takes place al fresco. Sebastian reassures himself by reference to daylight: "This is the air; that is the glorious sun" (108) and even the repressed Malvolio remarks on the clarity of his (mis-)conclusion: "Daylight and champaign discovers not more. This is open" (62). The pellucid quality of Cornish light has attracted generations of artists to the area (notably Barbara Hepworth and the Tate Gallery in St Ives). It is this quality that Nunn agilely exploits in order to symbolise the dawning maturity of the play's lovers.

While the characters' increasing self-knowledge is symbolised by their movement into the light, the deprivation of reason is correspondingly signalled by darkness. Of course in Shakespeare's play Toby talks of putting Malvolio "in a dark room" (88) but Nunn intensifies this unlit claustrophobia by having the steward in a windowless coal-hole, shuttered behind a grille. The coal dust has blackened Malvolio's face and clothes and he laments the "hideous darkness" (107) in which he is kept. As Eric C. Brown rightly insists, "The dispute over his sanity depends partly on his perception of light and dark" (26). Nunn points up the contrast between Sebastian's effortlessly successful ~~(Brown calls him "sunbathed" 26)~~ and Malvolio's laboured and unsuccessful wooing of Olivia. At the end of scene 124 in the Screenplay, Malvolio insists, "I am not mad" (107, the remainder of the scene as printed is omitted from the film). We cut immediately to the entwined and kissing Olivia and Sebastian and after her exit through the French windows into the sunlight, he is left to ponder his good fortune which almost persuades him that "I am mad" (109). Cut back to Malvolio shouting, "I am not mad!" As Olivia

recognises elsewhere, there are different kinds of madness: "I am as mad as he / If sad and merry madness equal be" (3.4.14-15, though cut from the film).

Orsino's court too is a place of gloom. Sitting in front of an open fire, he plays cards with Cesario, the smoke curling from their cigarettes filling the space between them and symbolising their barely concealed passion. Again, Orsino's bath is set in front of a roaring fire and, as Cesario sponges his back, a high window admits a bright shaft of white light which anticipates the play's revelation and restoration of Viola's identity.<sup>9</sup> The scene in Feste's barn takes place at night, Cesario and Orsino having found their way there by the light of a hurricane lamp. While the fool sings Come Away Death, master and servant come very close to an intimate smooch.<sup>10</sup>

Nunn's use of setting clearly contrasts the deceptive interiors with the natural authenticity of outdoors. It is no accident then that the unmasking (literally the un-moustaching) of Cesario occurs in Olivia's garden and other episodes which involve disclosure or discovery take place beyond the house: Toby's jilting of Andrew, Olivia's sexual entreaty to Cesario, the duel between Andrew and Cesario, the restoration of the twins, the ultimate truce between Orsino and Olivia and Feste's returning Viola's necklace to her which we (and presumably he) saw her discard on the beach at the

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<sup>9</sup> "Nunn transfers Orsino's early line about 'the rich golden shaft' to a later moment, when he is sitting in a bathtub when Cesario enters, eyes averted from (obviously) the golden shaft that she hopes to have some day" (Coursen 206).

<sup>10</sup> A number of critics have objected to the manner in which Nunn avoids same-sex eroticism. Jones writes, "Viola's cross-dressing is more comic than transgressive, because her destiny – as a woman – is so clearly signalled from the beginning" (15). Greer agrees, "There are a few moments when characters flirt with same-sex kisses and embraces, but the film studiously, and perhaps fastidiously, avoids anything more than a close call among the gender-confused pairs" (66). Magro and Douglas are critical of what they ~~rather petulantly~~ identify as "politically reactionary naturalisations of white heterosexuality in Nunn's film. [...] The entire narrative structure of the film pushes toward the ultimate closing down of radical possibilities for gender identification and sexual identity" (41, 52).

beginning. Indeed the film's closure has Feste's song over shots of departing guests as they remove themselves from this Illyrian house of illusions: Andrew departs in a pony and trap, clutching his canary cage, Antonio emerges from the gatehouse, turns his collar up against the rain, and "strides grimly away from the house" (131), Maria and Toby climb into a coach and leave to start married life together, while Malvolio, his position untenable in Olivia's household, departs on foot with a small suitcase and a rolled umbrella. Sans toupee, his grey hair is uncovered and Nunn explains, "when Malvolio leaves he no longer wears a wig because he's learnt a lesson about himself, that his vanity is now a thing of the past" (Laroque 90).

While the lovers host a dance within the bright magnificence of Olivia's hall (all the curtains are now open), Feste spins his way, whirligig fashion, along the cliff top, assuring us (he speaks directly into camera) that he will strive to please us "every day" (133): "He disappears from view. The sun sets and the sea washes ceaselessly on to the shore." As Nunn explicates, "The image of the sea is very important in Shakespeare's play and, of course, there is no more of a cinematic image than the expanse, the endless tidal movement, the sound of the sea" (Laroque 92). Climaxing with this maritime valediction, Nunn's Twelfth Night places the image of the sea at its vanishing point. The sea bookends the action of the film moving us tonally from the storm's destruction to the play's ambiguous resolution and Orsino's opportunistic beach-combing as he takes the newly revealed Viola to wife: "I shall have a share in this most happy wrack" (125). Nunn's maritime valedictory offers both "eye-offending brine" (1.1.29) and "salt waves

fresh in love" (3.4.376) and so captures the bewildering and comforting ebb and flow of Twelfth Night's poetic contradictions.

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