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### Never Two Ladies Lov'd as They Do: Queer Theory and As You Like It's Celia

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Honors Thesis

“Never Two Ladies Lov’d as They Do”: Queer Theory and *As You Like It*'s Celia

Theron L. F. Calkins

2 April 2012

Advisor: Dr. L. Monique Pittman

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## Abstract:

Though most performances of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* focus on the comedy of Ganymede/Rosalind's interactions with Orlando, director Des McAnuff's 2010 Stratford Shakespeare Festival production instead manifests homoerotic tension between Celia and Rosalind. Shakespeare's textual allusions provide ample evidence to support this homoerotic reading which McAnuff actualizes between Cara Rickett's Celia and Andrea Runge's Rosalind through blocking and speech inflection. My analysis encompasses a detailed investigation of this particular production as well as a study of homoerotic desire between women, facilitating a critique of the methods of queer theory by engaging and refining its generalized critical principles.

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Dr. L Monique Pittman

HONS497: Senior Honors Research

2 April 2012

“Never Two Ladies Lov’d as They Do”: Queer Theory and *As You Like It*'s Celia

Queer theory is difficult to pin down. Critics who fall into this school of criticism may study topics as varied as Foucauldian power structures, postcolonial hybridity, gender construction, or non-heteronormative sexualities. Yet, despite these varied topic areas, something must bring all these thinkers and their insights together in order for the field to have some sort of meaningful coherence. Paradoxically, much of this unity derives from the slippery nature of the term “queer” itself. The earliest recorded uses of the term (around 1390) are as a verb meaning to question or inquire about something, but shortly afterward, circa 1513, the word acquired an additional denotation as an adjective meaning “strange, odd, peculiar, eccentric” (OED). Finally, by 1894, the word became a noun, a derogatory label for homosexuals (OED). With so many definitions of its defining term jostling for dominance, it's no surprise that queer theory is itself rather ambiguous, more an umbrella under which many different theorists unite than a well-defined school of criticism. In fact, it is not uncommon for many queer theorists to intentionally avoid a specific designation for their critical approach.

Still, the history of queer theory as a field of study tends to reverse the development of the term itself, and from this historical perspective, common thematic foci can be discerned. Originally, queer theory grew out of the work of gay and lesbian studies in literature trying to identify and engage these non-normative sexualities as they are expressed in various literary modes. This development is often attributed to the theoretical work of Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick; both expanded the scope of their critical inquiry from studying queerness through the

eyes of homosexual persons to investigating society's production of the idea of queerness itself. Moving from the noun to the adjective, these two theorists and those they inspired examine the ways that individual human beings and society as a whole construct categories for biological sex, social gender identity, and erotic desire. Finding inspiration in Foucault and deconstructionism, queer theory focused on how literature functions both to perpetuate and to undermine culture's application of categories—descriptive labels such as “queer” and “normal”—to individuals and their expressions of sexuality and gender identity (Bertens 186-91).

As queer theory gathered more adherents, it further expanded its theoretical focus. Incorporating elements of other critical schools such as postcolonialism and Marxism to name two, it moved from just challenging the idea of heteronormativity to questioning the very nature of identity and the self. Reflecting on this, queer theorist Madhavi Menon claims

The characteristic of queer theory that makes it at once attractive to theorists and vulnerable to critics is that it can never define the queer. Rather than attaching to specific times and authors, queerness allows us to encounter the violence of specificity itself by being excluded from its ambit. . . . If queerness can be defined, then it is no longer queer—it strays away from its anti-normative stance to become the institutionalized norm. Queerness is not a category but the confusion engendered by and despite categorization. (Menon 7)

Menon captures the difficulty of restricting queer theory to a specific domain as that would conflict with the very essence of the approach, engaging the “violence of specificity itself”. Yet, when one surveys the output of queer theory, a few common interests are discernible. From such an empirical survey, contemporary queer theory can perhaps best be described as an investigation of boundaries: how society constructs boundaries, how the self is defined both interiorly and exteriorly in relation

to those boundaries, and, most critically, how human desire (not necessarily sexual, but often understood as such) both strengthens and rebels against those boundaries.

What most unites queer theory is the idea of desire (Menon 6-10). The foundational conception of humanity that arises from queer theory is that of embodied desire, a self that is most fundamentally defined by its desires for power, pleasure, and unity. It is to further these goals that individuals establish boundaries to control and contain their identities and those of others. And it is to fulfill these desires that individuals just as often modify or resist boundaries when they are perceived as ineffective in exerting power over others, restrictive in terms of pursuing pleasure, or too inaccurate for self-definition. Of course, these desires are neither well-defined nor necessarily mutually exclusive, making a self emerging from their confluence just as indeterminate. Thus, it is the very multitudinous and unruly nature of desire which prevents queer theory from being comprehensively defined. Just as the self becomes a fractured, tumultuous battlefield of disparate desires, unified by fiat through common embodiment, queer theory is a loose association of critics with diverse interests who happen to embody their critiques with respect to common themes and approaches. Thus, it should not be surprising when any self-reflective individual or theorist has difficulty bringing these defining, theoretical preoccupations into practical, living coherence.

These considerations readily explain queer theory's fascination with William Shakespeare. Not only an extremely well-respected member of the English canon, Shakespeare is also often cited as the poet who best captures the essence of what it means to be human. Predictably, many prominent queer theorists such as Jonathan Goldberg, Valerie Traub, Bruce Smith, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick have all engaged Shakespeare in their studies. Yet, this intersection between queer theory and such a major cultural icon could drastically alter the way we perceive Shakespeare and understand his works, even changing the way we see ourselves. Dialoging with the author who embodied human nature both textually and theatrically unavoidably raises the stakes of the analysis.

Thus, precisely because of the Bard's influence, this challenge forces queer theory to bring its best insights about the human condition to bear on Shakespeare's works or risk falling to the very beast it hopes to tame. These careful deployments will produce many useful reflections on the accuracy, applicability, and fruitfulness of queer theory's methods. In sum, Shakespeare's canon provides a respected, content-rich arena wherein queer theory can exercise and hone its critical muscle.

As much as queer theory can benefit from engaging Shakespeare, Shakespearean studies can likewise benefit from applying queer theory to the Bard's works. One finds no shortage of desire in Shakespeare's texts. Focusing on sexual desire, one particularly striking example is the complex web of erotic relationships brought to life in Shakespeare's romantic comedy *As You Like It* (1599/1600). In the play, the daughter of a banished duke, Rosalind, disguises herself as the boy, Ganymede, and runs away from the court of her usurping uncle with her cousin and best friend, Celia, to the Forest of Arden. While there, under the guise of Ganymede, Rosalind befriends her love interest Orlando and convinces him to woo Ganymede as if the youth were Orlando's beloved Rosalind. Ganymede also inadvertently attracts the eye of Phebe, a stubborn shepherdess irritated at her friend Silvius's continual advances. The play concludes with a total of four marriages, including an unexpected coupling of Celia and Orlando's brother Oliver, who himself recently underwent a change a heart. Though most criticism of *As You Like It* focuses mainly on the comedy and subversion of Ganymede/Rosalind's interactions with Orlando and Phebe, reading from a queer perspective uncovers how other characters, such a Celia, function in the text.

In fact, such an analysis reveals that though the play apparently ends by affirming heteronormative ideals, thanks to the institution of four marriages in the finale, other elements of the text—most notably the homoerotic tension embedded in Rosalind and Celia's relationship—undercuts such a reading. Additionally, a recurring performance tradition of queering the relationships present in the play, most often that between Ganymede and Orlando, enlivens the



subversive possibilities of Shakespeare's text and furthers the comfortable association of queer theory and performance criticism. Notably, director Des McAnuff's Stratford Shakespeare Festival 2010 production recently embraced a concomitant performance tradition by manifesting the homoerotic possibilities between Celia and Rosalind that Shakespeare's text hints at. Ultimately, the complications present regarding this relationship, both in the playtext and the production's finale, form a productive, practical basis from which to assess both the limits and strengths of queer theory's methodological assumptions.

Before beginning to examine the text, however, the careful critic must be cautious when examining same-sex desire in any part of Shakespeare's oeuvre due to the Bard's historical location. Shakespeare writes at a time before the modern idea of homosexuality existed. That is, of course, not to say that actions a modern spectator might label homosexual did not exist at the time, merely that such expressions of non-heteronormativity were considered just that, actions, not identities. The difficulty when discussing Renaissance sexuality from a contemporary vantage point is that modern categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality can anachronistically interfere with the debate. Current understandings of sexuality center on the idea of an orientation, a tendency to be attracted to a certain gender perceived to be a stable, if not immutable, foundation for a person's identity. Such was not the case during the Renaissance (*Orgel Impersonations* 59). Foucault argues that this modern idea of sexuality's ability to define a person, that "The most discrete event in one's sexual behavior—whether an accident or a deviation, a deficit or an excess—was deemed capable of entailing the most varied consequences throughout one's existence", has only existed since the nineteenth century (65). In contrast, Renaissance attitudes toward sexuality focused on its embodied expressions, outlawing acts such as sodomy and buggery. But as neither of these practices were exclusively practiced by men having sex with men, they did not function as explicitly discriminatory towards a specific category of people as modern readers might interpret them today. In fact,

identifying and villainizing these acts served not to distinguish those who practiced them from other humans or other men, but to exemplify and perpetuate a belief in the general subversiveness (or in Puritan language, sinfulness) of mankind. Essentially, the sodomite was not a new type of man distinguished by his desire for other men, but another example of the general depravity of humanity (Smith 11-17).

Consequently, discussion of desire within Shakespeare's texts must be articulated so as to acknowledge this disparity of historical and modern terms. One method, premiered by Sedgwick, uses the term homosocial desire, a construction that productively unites the ideas of erotic desire and homosocial relations, companionship between two or more individuals of the same gender (1-2). However, Valerie Traub goes even further with this discussion, thrusting the idea of erotic desire directly into a homosocial context through her term homoerotic (16). The term also succinctly connotes both a middle ground between and a hybrid of the homosocial and the homosexual spheres. By capturing the potential of homosexual erotic desire to strengthen homosocial bonds, or conversely, of intense homosocial bonding to foster erotic longing, the term homoerotic encapsulates a wide variety of situations of interest to queer theory.

It is also significant that the term homoerotic is applied to sexual attraction between two individuals of the same gender whether acknowledged and acted upon or not; homoerotic attraction does not assume homosexual behavior, merely the presence of desire. Proving the case for sexual activity between two characters is quite difficult<sup>1</sup> especially given the tendency of most literary works of good repute to present such activity behind the screen of metaphor, pun, allusion, or double entendre. Arguing that the author intended the audience to interpret a particular pairing as engaging in a sexual relationship is problematic on multiple levels, and the claim is difficult to prove for heterosexual pairings, let alone those engaging in the “love that dare not speak its name”.

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<sup>1</sup> Traub herself humorously emphasizes this limit in her own work, admitting “Nor do I argue for a quantifiable increase in female-female sex [during the Renaissance];. . . indeed, I would not know how to measure it” (Traub 8).

However, this tendency toward allusive representation of sexual consummation actually facilitates a more general focus on erotic desire. Demonstrating that the characters in question are repeatedly dwelling on sexually charged topics is much easier to do than catching them actually acting on their desires. Those same conversations that occluded the possibility of a sexual relationship are now solid evidence that these characters are preoccupied with titillating topics.

Unfortunately, here we run into the problem of purpose: merely discussing libidinous topics does not necessarily imply a desire to act on those pronouncements. More generally, while an individual may participate in a certain behavior, which can be objectively observed by the critic, the reasons behind that action remain inaccessible to critical scrutiny, locked within the psyche. When considering situations of a sexual character, this gap between an action and its motivating desire becomes especially important as a sloppy critical approach can easily perpetuate the error of assuming all sexually charged acts spring from an overflowing erotic desire for consummation. Many other motivating desires may instead backdrop a particular behavior. For example, relying on René Girard's schema of triangulated desire between a male-female-male unit, Sedgwick explores the potentially homoerotic ways that concerns for power, dominance, and the perpetuation of patriarchy between men play out in literature and beyond (25). Her analysis concretely demonstrates the existence of desires which can motivate homoerotic behavior besides direct sexual attraction to the same gender.

One modern example of erroneously equating behavior with desire would be carelessly mining a transcript of a stereotypically lewd locker-room conversation for homoerotic themes, themes likely to appear given such an analysis. This is because, to a large extent, the task of identifying homoerotic behavior dwells in the realm of reader-response with a distinct bias toward the observer, listener, or reader and their perception of the behavior in question. Vitality, homoerotic behavior may be present whether those involved acknowledge it or not; the critic can

identify words, situations, or actions as homoerotic without the knowledge or consent of those involved. In the final analysis, identifying homoerotic behavior is more a matter of how the observing audience understands the acts in question than how the participant's themselves perceive their behavior.

Despite positioning the identification process for homoerotic behavior under the reader's control, queer theory correspondingly limits how much critics can speak about a particular participant's desires. Critics must avoid reading too much into a situation; while behavior may be readily labeled as potentially homoerotic, individual desires are not so easily understood. Returning to the locker room example, it is difficult to distinguish between those who participate in such homoerotic speech and behavior in order to fit in with their peers or socially constructed norms; those who pursue these acts for their own sake, but only do so in this confined context; and those for whom these actions are transparent manifestations of more comprehensive homoerotic affections. Unfortunately, the interiority of intent and the multiplicity of reasons for individual action severely limit the critic's ability to generalize from declaration to desire, from word to thought, and from behavior to character.

In order to make such conclusions, critics must carefully consider the context of the situation. Some relevant questions to address include whether the act or utterance in question was produced in a context that facilitates such homoerotic behavior. Is the behavior conforming to social expectations? Does it actually serve to support the establish boundaries of erotic desire in some way (as Sedgwick demonstrates)? On the other hand, is homoerotic behavior like this consistently expressed in a multitude of contexts? Is it focused on a single individual? Is there other evidence (extra-textual stage details, authorial biography, authorial intention, etc.) to support a homoerotic reading of the character's desire? All these contextual considerations provide alternative avenues through which to interpret the behavior in question. Before positing that a particular

character's behavior is best understood through a homoerotic lens, (an argument about that character's identity,) all other possibilities should be considered first. But how can a critic judge the interpretive viability of a particular explanation in light of so many other possibilities vying for attention as a character's primary motive? Again, though a critic or observer can easily argue for a homoerotic undercurrent to a particular behavior, arguing that the presented eroticism indicates a deeper sexual longing in the character is much more difficult.

Thankfully, queer theory's assumptions can also aid a critic in navigating this apparent impasse of interior intentionality and further pursuing the purpose of individual acts. In addition to assuming that humans are embodied estuaries of desire, queer theory also conceives of personal identity as performative. Human selves are aggregates of effects, not essential causes. Butler writes:

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the surface* of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.

(Butler, 185, emphasis original)

Butler makes clear that there is no essential self or identity; what each individual perceives as essential about another or themselves is merely a continuity of desire and the historical narrative of acts that desire motivates. Despite this absence of a personal transcendental signifier whose stability may be manifest in an objectively defined identity, individuals still desire self-unity and so pursue an ideal through their actions, constructing themselves to emulate that ideal and creating the illusion of an essential self.

Here I must quibble with Butler over the extent of the self's agency. While Butler's *Gender Trouble* leaves interpretive room for an agentic vision of the self, she later makes it clear that the idea of performativity does not necessarily provide any agency to the performers. Her argument then implies that sexual acts, when combined with a desire for self-unity, originality, and authority, lead to exclusionary definitions of sexual identity in order to justify their existence (Bertens 190). However, it is not clear who or what precisely is doing this excluding, begging the question of an intentional self.

Significantly, not all queer theorists agree with Butler's logical lobotomy of the agentic self. A middle ground exists between an essentially defined self and a self totally constituted by outside forces and uncontrollable desires. I propose and have assumed throughout my paper a self composed of a limited agentic capacity to choose between competing desires in the pursuit of action. Such a self retains the ability to control behavior within a range of possibilities outlined by its primary desires and so possesses some level of intention related to the end goal of a desire. In other words, the self can choose to pursue a particular purpose, the ultimate fruition of one or more of its desires, and choose between which desires it pursues. The aggregation of these abilities encompasses my working definition of intention.

Still, desires constrain the self's choices, and those motivated actions in turn affect the primacy of various desires, providing a mechanism for performativity to affect behavior and construct the self. Altogether, while individuals can choose between the desires they possess, they cannot choose which desires constitute the self. In this aspect, I come close to the idea of contingency and a self simultaneously dominated by and dominating chance factors proposed by Valerie Rohy (59).

One origin of such imposed desire is social context, the combined effect of a community's idealizations. Performativity is not confined to the individual sphere; groups can also construct

themselves around shared desires and common experiences. This collective idealizing due to social interaction further perpetuates the illusion of an essential self and creates apparently definite categories for characteristics like race, gender, and erotic desire. These categorical definitions are then internalized by a populous and the cycle continues: the individual desiring to conform to social norms giving rise to relatively homogenous groups which in turn inspire more individuals to conform.

One example of this performative process would be a young man trying to bolster his masculine identity under the impression that men are muscular (an insight reinforced by social norms, but not necessarily a universal survey of all men). Thus, he bulks up, fulfilling the sign he established for manliness and reinforcing his masculine identity despite the non-essential nature of the inciting speculation, namely that men are muscular. In effect, the lad is fulfilling his own stereotype and drawing his identity from confirming that empty standard. As Stephen Orgel articulates, “masculinity is achieved not through biology but through an effort of will” (*Impersonations* 19). Gender does not rely on a person’s genitalia so much as their conformity to social norms, revealing an identity scripted by desire and enacted through performance both privately and publically.

However, this performative aspect of identity helps to counteract the unknowability encountered when trying to distinguish homoerotic language from homoerotic desire. Butler claims that “the play of signified absences”, the actions and utterances that form human behavior, “suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (185). Thus, one can deduce certain things about a person's desires, their motivating principles for identity, from their actions. For example, because human selves are constructed out of their actions, and those actions are motivated by desires, the act of speaking or behaving homoerotically necessarily becomes a formative piece of a person's identity. While such acts can be reasoned away or even rejected—the self constructing

itself in opposition to them—those homoerotic behaviors are still building blocks of identity. Thus, the very presence of these homoerotic acts provides some important information about the character's interior self, and the desires that motivate them. However, even more significant for understanding a character's primary desires is their reaction to the performance of their desires. In the present context this includes their reaction to the very presence of those homoerotic acts in the self's identity. Luckily, such reflections on past behavior can be gathered from actions and utterances in other contexts, especially those forcing the character to reconcile themselves to these desires or acts through their enactment by other characters or repetition in other contexts.

In summary, queer theorists ultimately find themselves in a relatively informative position in relation to the question of discerning a character's motivating desires. While a character's self is immune to comprehensive definition due to both the critic's and the character's inability to directly access that desire, much can be gleaned about that individual's identity from their patterns of performance, namely manifestation of and attitudes toward their desires. Just as an observer can make productive inferences about the goings-on of an inaccessible room by evaluating the people and objects that enter and exit it, a queer theorist can begin to identify the primary desires motivating the self by observing what actions and attitudes emerge from its black box.

For a brief example of applying these concerns to a specific scenario, consider a Renaissance account of bed-sharing between two women. When analyzing this artifact, a queer theorist must first acknowledge that such sleeping arrangements are often the result of social and environmental factors, like limited sleeping space and cold weather. However, such behavior is also rightly seen as inherently homoerotic (Traub 52-53). Still, an analysis of the potential consequences of this behavior for the characters involved must account for the frequency of this action, the attitudes of the two women toward the event, the interactions of the two women prior to, during, and after the event, the circumstances leading up to the event, the narrative or narrator's perspective on the event,



and many other relevant factors before any conclusions about the character's desires for one another may be made. The women's behavior can be readily studied, but their desires must be more carefully and systematically inferred.

In light of these observations about the differentiation between homoerotic language and homoerotic longing, the careful critic should set standards from which to demonstrate that a homoerotic element is present in a relationship and to what extent that element may be said to characterize the desire of those characters involved. As discussed above, homoerotic language or action exists primarily for the observer. Thus, if present in a text, a traditional close reading of the situation in question should uncover whether characters' words or actions are erotically charged. These judgments are unavoidably left to the discretion of the critic, but that does not necessarily imply recourse to a kind of "I know it when I see it" standard. For example, the following analysis of Shakespeare's story mines words or actions which demonstrate an intense emotional bond or reveal a high level of physical intimacy and affection between two same-gendered characters for homoerotic content. Then, analysis of the context of those homoerotic acts informs further propositions regarding the presence of homoerotic desire in the characters themselves. This includes evaluating contemporary historical attitudes toward the words or acts in question. Yet, perhaps the most important evaluation must be directed back towards the text to discover the reasons behind each individual character's participation in this homoerotic behavior. Necessarily, access to this primary desire is limited to evaluations of the character's behavior, so conclusions should be drawn cautiously. Still, much can be gleaned by tracking patterns and repetition of sexually loaded behavior, as well as the character's attitudes toward their own actions and the comparable ones of others.

To demonstrate, a queer analysis of the beginning of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* readily provides ample evidence for a homoerotic reading of Celia and Rosalind's relationship. Before

either character appears, the court wrestler Charles reveals to Oliver that Celia and Rosalind have been together since birth and “never two ladies lov’d as they do” (1.1.112). He claims that had Rosalind been banished with her father, Duke Senior, Celia would either have accompanied her beloved friend (a claim played out before the act is over) or died from loneliness. In the next scene, when Le Beau, another courtier, describes the two cousins to Orlando he says their “loves / are dearer than the natural bond of sisters” (1.2.275-76). Celia and Rosalind share a closeness that far surpasses their expected familial connection as cousins. In fact, this emotional bond is so profound that even the minor characters of the play pick up on it and cite it as a centrally defining characteristic of the pair when describing them to outsiders. It seems one need know little else about the two other than their strong emotional connection.

When Celia and Rosalind do appear together on stage, their playful banter reaffirms their close friendship. However, some imbalance of affection can be detected. At Rosalind’s resistance to her merrymaking, Celia quickly accuses her friend “Herein I see thou lov’st me not with the full weight that I love thee. If my uncle, thy banish’d father, had banish’d thy uncle, the Duke my father, so thou hadst been still with me, I could have taught my love to take thy father for mine; so wouldst thou, if the truth of thy love to me were so righteously temper’d as mine is to thee” (1.2.8-9, 13-14). Later, after her father has banished Rosalind, Celia pleads:

Celia.           Prithee be cheerful. Know’st thou not the Duke  
                          Hath banish’d me, his daughter?

Rosalind.       That he hath not.

Celia.           No, hath not? Rosalind lacks then the love  
                          Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one.  
                          Shall we be sund’red? shall we part, sweet girl? (1.3.94-98)

In each passage, Celia expresses a concern that Rosalind does not share the same depth of affection as she feels toward Rosalind. Further, these outbursts occur in close proximity to each other, but in different scenes and contexts, one just as the characters are directly introduced in a flurry of levity and fun and the second following a traumatic event in the lives of the two cousins. The second instance provides a sobering contrast to the first's apparent jest, while the first demonstrates this nagging concern even in times of joviality. Celia emphasizes this perceived inequality of affection at both times, suggesting that it is a persistent concern regarding her relationship to Rosalind.

Significantly, a closer evaluation of these two moments reveals that unreciprocated homoerotic attraction on Celia's part may be the cause of the inequality of affection she perceives between herself and Rosalind. In the first passage, Celia claims that "thou lov'st me not with the full weight that I love thee" (1.2.8-9). Besides describing her emotional insecurities regarding the relationship with Rosalind, Celia uses a physical metaphor of "full weight" to convey her concerns. Such a metaphor potentially elicits an image of one cousin carrying the weight of the other or the other's love. From this image, one gets a sense of leaning, or resting weight on another person, promoting images of physical dependence, contact, intimacy, and possibly, if more liberally interpreted, bawdily balanced bodies.

Just a bit later in the same passage, Celia claims she would be happier "if the truth of thy love to me were so righteously temper'd as mine is to thee" (1.2.13-14). Here again, Celia's word choice evokes intriguing interpretations about the tenor of the desire motivating her statement. According to the OED, the primary definition of temper is to be "brought to or having a proper or desired temper, quality, or consistence (usually by mixture of elements or mingling of qualities)". As above, Celia seems primarily concerned with articulating her dissatisfaction at the quality of Rosalind's reciprocal affection, yet Celia may also be suggesting a remedy to this arrangement through her reference to metallurgy. To temper implies a mixing of some kind, which in this case

seems to mean a merging of the two cousins' loves for each other. And, if bodies follow loves, Celia is again alluding to a kind of physical union between her cousin and herself, a union "righteously" endorsed.

But this is not the only example of Celia seeking some kind of moral or spiritual sanction for her relationship to Rosalind. Within her comforting words to her cousin, Celia laments "Rosalind lacks then the love / Which teacheth thee that thou and I am one. / Shall we be sund'red?" (1.3.96-98). Celia's statement recalls the Biblical institution of marriage, later affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19:5, that "Therefore shal man leave his father and his mother, and shal cleave to his wife, and they shalbe one flesh" (Gen. 2.24).<sup>2</sup> Celia's question, "Shall we be sund'red?" also resembles the wording used during Anglican marriages: "Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (qtd. in Traub 171).<sup>3</sup> With these allusions, Celia constructs her relationship with Rosalind as analogous to marriage, inviting speculation about the extent of the simile.

Celia also borrows from religious tradition by paralleling the language of Ruth and Naomi, a Biblical pair of women occasionally interpreted in a homoerotic light (Boswell 105). Celia's situation resembles that of Ruth in that each eloquently refuses to break their close bond to another woman in the face of a potential separation. While Naomi has lost both sons and husband, Rosalind has similarly lost the affection of both father figures in her life: the love of her already banished biological father as well as the trust of her uncle, Celia's father. In light of these changes, both Rosalind and Naomi must leave their current homes, and both also initially plan to leave behind the women who mean the most to them. In response to Naomi's repeated promptings to return home

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<sup>2</sup> In this and all Biblical quotes to follow, I have silently accounted for typographical differences between *The Geneva Bible* and modern English ('u' to 'v', 'f' to 's', 'y' to 'y', etc.) for the sake of comprehension, but retained archaic spelling and word construction when these do not significantly hinder a modern reader.

<sup>3</sup> This passage closely follows the wording of Mark 10:9, the verses previous to which reiterate the Genesis institution of marriage: "For this cause shal man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife. And they twaine shalbe one flesh: so that they are no more twaine, but one flesh. Therefore, what God hathe coupled to / gether, let not man separate" (Mark 10.7-9). Interestingly, the end of these verses is translated "asunder" in the King James Bible, aligning it with the church's liturgical interpretation.

“Ruth answered, Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to departe from thee: for whither thou goest, I wil go: and where thou dwellest, I wil dwel: thy people *shalbe* my people, and thy God my God. Where you dyest, wil I dye, and there wil I be buried. the Lord do so to me & more also, if *oght* but death departe thee & me” (Ruth 1.16-17, emphasis retained). Mirroring the intense emotional attachment and pursuit of continued physical proximity, Celia responds to Rosalind’s insinuations of facing banishment alone by crying

Shall we be sund’red? shall we part, sweet girl?  
 No, let my father seek another heir.  
 Therefore devise with me how we may fly,  
 Whither to go, and what to bear with us,  
 And do not seek to take your change upon you,  
 To bear your griefs yourself, and leave me out;  
 For by this heaven, now at our sorrows pale,  
 Say what thou canst, I’ll go along with thee. (1.3.98-105)

Like Ruth, Celia is willing to forfeit any claims she may have in her father’s house and seek her fortunes wherever her friend travels. These parallels between Ruth and Celia are further reinforced by Celia’s previous statement to Rosalind that if their roles had been reversed, and Celia’s father had been banished instead, “I could have taught my love to take thy father for mine” (1.2.11-12).

Overall, Celia’s willingness to take on new circumstances, whether a new family or a new home, for the sake of staying close to Rosalind connects her with the potentially homoerotic Biblical account of Ruth and Naomi’s relationship. Additionally, these lines reaffirm Charles the wrestler’s earlier claim that Celia “would have follow’d her [Rosalind’s] exile, or have died to stay behind her. . . . never two ladies lov’d as they do” (1.1.109-110, 112). Celia would rather give up her position at the

court and betray her father to maintain physical proximity with her cousin than compromise the emotional bond she and Rosalind share.

Even Celia's nicknames for her cousin nearly overflow with homoerotic potential. By calling Rosalind "my sweet Rose, my dear Rose", Celia demonstrates a familiarity with her cousin that reinforces their emotional connection (1.2.23). However, the possessive aspect of the pet name as well as the frequent use of the rose as a symbol of love hints at something more to their relationship. And when the frequent use of flowers as symbols for female genitalia in Renaissance art is considered, Celia's words appear even more provocative.<sup>4</sup> In that light, Celia's pet name amorously connects her own genitalia ("my sweet rose") to those of her cousin ("my sweet *Rose/rose*"). This interplay relies on language's imperfect ability to signify to condense the two women down to their sexual organs, which become indistinguishable in the utterance's ambiguous construction; Celia's apparently innocent pet name suddenly becomes a steamy example of homoeroticism.

In light of all these allusions to homoerotic behavior, Celia does provide some explanation for the intense loyalty and passion she feels toward her cousin. While defending Rosalind against the Duke's accusations of treason, Celia explains her feeling, referring, at first, to her father's original banishment of his brother, Duke Senior:

I did not then entreat to have her stay,  
 It was your pleasure and your own remorse.  
 I was too young that time to value her,  
 But now I know her. If she be a traitor,  
 Why, so am I. We still have slept together,  
 Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together,

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<sup>4</sup> Consider, for example, Touchstone's plainly vulgar mimicry of Orlando's "love" poetry: "He that sweetest rose will find, / Must find love's prick and Rosalind" (3.2.111-12). The fool puns on the raunchy implications of "rose" and "prick" to achieve his ends.

And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans,  
 Still we went coupled and inseparable. (1.3.73-76)

Celia's words map out the course of her relationship with Rosalind. As expected, Celia again demonstrates a strong affection for her cousin, speaking against her father in defense of her friend. Her lines also reaffirm many of the previous allusions already examined. Playing on the common Biblical meaning of the word, Celia's claim to now "know" Rosalind may carry the sense "To be sexually intimate with; esp. to have sexual intercourse with" as well as several more chaste denotations (OED).<sup>5</sup> Further upping the homoerotic ante, this alternative meaning is presented in close textual proximity to a reference to bed sharing. Of course, two females sharing a bed during the Renaissance was neither unusual nor necessarily indicative of a sexual relationship, but Celia's acknowledgment of extended physical contact with Rosalind in the bedchamber and beyond raises the possibility of a homoerotic interpretation of these lines (Traub 52-53).

This possibility is reinforced further by the repetition of Rosalind's erotically charged pet name "Rose" in the very next line. Here, the word is used as a verb, expanding its meaning in another direction while still retaining its previously explored connotations. However, these extra connotations are now invoked in the context of a performed action due to the word's current grammatical function. Further, these competing interpretive possibilities become more significant given the verb's extra weight as an opening trochee and its continued capitalization, aesthetically linking it to Celia's previously cited pet name. Such emphasis on the word "Rose" raises its importance in these lines and encourages a deeper look at what it signifies, bringing its homoerotic elements into sharper focus.

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<sup>5</sup> Significantly, the OED cites two uses of "know" in this sense from Shakespeare: one from *All's Well that Ends Well* and a second from *Measure for Measure*, indicating that this erotic sense was certainly available to the Bard to play and pun on.

Even more suggestive are Celia's following allusions to Juno, Roman god of marriage,<sup>6</sup> and swans, common symbols of monogamy and marriage.<sup>7</sup> The fact that swans were traditionally associated with Venus and not Juno further strengthens the allusion by breaking the historical cliché (*Riverside* 409). With this comparison, Celia again constructs her relationship with Rosalind as analogous to marriage, inviting speculation about the extent of the simile. As Traub opines "Celia's transposition thus conflates erotic love and marriage in the service of female amity" (171). Celia's words continue to blur the lines between chaste, homosocial female affection and devotion and passionate, homerotic longing and desire.

More interesting is the mythological parallel Celia draws between her relationship to her cousin and that between Jove and Juno, a comparison reinforced as the play continues. In the above passage, Celia invokes Juno to explain the closeness she feels between herself and Rosalind, linking herself with the queen of the gods. Interestingly, Rosalind then consistently aligns herself with Jupiter, king of the gods and Juno's husband. This association is most obvious when Rosalind's assumption of the false name Ganymede is considered. Ganymede was the beautiful youth whom Jove took to Olympus to serve as the gods' cupbearer, and Rosalind assumes this masculine identity when she and Celia are forced to run away from the palace together. Yet, Rosalind (or is it Ganymede?) also often calls on Jupiter's name as the play progresses: once lamenting "O Jupiter, how [weary] are my spirits!" (2.4.1), exclaiming "Jove, Jove! this shepherd's passion / Is much upon my fashion" (2.4.60-61), teasing "O most gentle Jupiter, what tedious homily of love have you wearied your parishioners withal" (3.3.155-56), and when swooning "It may well be call'd Jove's tree, when it drops [such] fruit" (3.2.236-37). In this way, Rosalind associates herself with Jove with

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<sup>6</sup> "Wedding is great Juno's crown" (5.4.141).

<sup>7</sup> Ironically, Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*), the white birds native to the United Kingdom, occasionally exhibit homosexual behavior. These birds were some of the first animals to be studied for the purpose of learning more about homosexuality in nature. Same-sex pairings of birds typically mate for life just like heterosexual pairings and even may create and defend a nest together (Bagemihl 487-91).



Celia taking the role of Juno.<sup>8</sup> Notably, any relationship between the two cousins would be incestuous, just like the union between siblings Jove and Juno. Additionally, Jove's penchant for seeking extra-marital satisfaction doesn't bode well for the parallel relationship, especially as Rosalind/Ganymede begins to court Orlando. Ultimately, while this mythological schema places Celia and Rosalind in a context of commitment, reinforcing the homoerotic undertones of their relationship, it simultaneously undermines that relationship, potentially explaining some of Celia's future behavior due to her association with the jealous goddess.

Of course, Rosalind's false name in itself suggests a homoerotic element to her relationship with Celia. In this instance, Shakespeare maintains the allusion originally presented in the source text for the play, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie* (1590). In the Greek mythos, the story of Zeus and Ganymede tells of a young man kidnaped by Zeus to become his cupbearer because he was the most handsome youth in the world. The myth was frequently interpreted homoerotically as by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*:

Let me celebrate love,  
the adversary of death and even sometimes the master  
of gods themselves. Their passions for mortals, both boys and maidens. . . .  
“Jupiter loved the delectable Phrygian Ganymede  
and turned himself into a bird for the sake of this dishy boy. (10.153-58)

Ovid's description and other recountings of the myth prompted a long tradition of classical paintings on “The Rape of Ganymede”. In addition to these classical homoerotic overtone, the

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<sup>8</sup> One significant deviation from this mythological analogy is Celia's comment while watching Orlando and Charles wrestling that “If I had a thunderbolt in mine eye, I can tell who should down” (1.2.214-15). Clearly, this reference to Jupiter's most famous symbol links Celia to the male god. Several interpretations are possible to explain this discrepancy. Rosalind may have constructed the schema as a counter to Celia's affection after her cousin's defense invoked the figure of Juno. Alternatively, Celia may have envisioned herself in the dominant role in the cousin's relationship (due to her apparent abundance of passion) prior to Rosalind's assumption of male identity. Unfortunately, the situation is made even more difficult to interpret due to Orlando's involvement. Celia's comments to Orlando in this scene are ambiguous enough that she may already be expressing hostility toward her future rival for Rosalind's affection. In any case, Celia's words here complicate, but do not contradict, the basic associations outlined above.

early modern word “catamite” for a young male used for homosexual purposes came from the Latin translation of Ganymede’s name (OED). Thus, Rosalind’s assumption of the name Ganymede for herself is a loaded action; Rosalind’s new name implies her own self-definition in terms of classical homoeroticism, a choice with implications not only for her later behavior towards Orlando, but also for her relationship with her dear friend Celia.

Lodge’s tale also presents even more classical allusions with a homoerotic slant when describing the relationship between Celia’s counterpart Alinda and Rosalynde. In *Rosalynde*, Alinda predicts that the relationship between the two women will be remembered with the friendship of Pylades and Orestes (Lodge 35). Because homosocial male/male bonds were a frequent trope used to emblemize ideal friendship during the Renaissance, period literature frequently invoked the relationship of two famous male heroes to describe two characters’ friendship. However, the story of Pylades and Orestes, frequently associated with tales of other “dear friends” such as Achilles and Patroclus<sup>9</sup> and Theseus and Pirithous, itself carries some homoerotic overtones (Norton 288-90). Correspondingly, Alinda’s allusion colors her relationship with Rosalynde with the same homoerotic overtones as the ancient myths, a coloring significantly amplified in Shakespeare’s retelling of the story.

Considered in sum, these allusions elevate Celia and Rosalind’s relationship from purely homosocial to potentially homoerotic. The dialogue in these early scenes clearly demonstrates the intense emotional bond between the cousins. Further, the friends’ interactions express a physical dependency between them, a sense of bodily closeness that Celia has enjoyed for some time and is willing to go to great lengths to maintain. Overall, the consistency and intensity of these various pronouncements warrant a reevaluation of Celia’s desires. Her comments both to and about her

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<sup>9</sup> Shakespeare himself seems to doubt that Achilles and Patroclus’s relationship was purely platonic. In the play *Troilus and Cressida*, the scurrilous Thersites accuses Patroclus of being a “male varlot” before calling him more plainly Achilles’ “masculine whore” (5.1.16, 18).

cousin consistently raise serious questions about the nature of their relationship. In light of this evidence, a homoerotic attraction to Rosalind, her cousin and friend, seems to be a key motivating factor in Celia's behavior. Such an interpretation is neither entirely absent from Shakespeare's source, nor unique within the context of his other plays. Shakespearean scholar Carol Neely affirms that "The first act of *As You Like It* represents the romantic (and in performance potentially homoerotic) love of Celia and Rosalind in a more extended way than any such affections. . . performed elsewhere in Shakespearean comedy" (122).

Unfortunately, much less evidence is present to support a reciprocal element to this relationship. In fact, Celia's own attitude indicates that this erotic infatuation may not be returned as strongly, if at all. Much of the play text supports a straight-forward interpretation of Rosalind as primarily attracted to Orlando, a match established with Orlando's victory over Charles, leaving Celia as her precious friend, but nothing more. This conflict between Celia's desires and her actual state provides a fruitful framework for interpreting her future actions in the play. For one thing, *Aliena*, Celia's assumed name, is Latin for "the estranged one" (*Riverside* 410); perhaps her choice, "something that hath a reference to my state", references not just her falling out with her father, but also her estrangement from Rosalind, who, as well as not reciprocating Celia's passion, has now assumed a male identity (1.3.127).

This interpretive framework is especially helpful in decoding the stage performance of *As You Like It* directed by Des McAnuff at the 2010 Stratford Shakespeare Festival. As Neely predicts, McAnuff's production highlights the homoerotic elements of Celia and Rosalind's relationship, but it also fails to provide an entirely satisfactory conclusion to the tension it invokes. Tracking these trends in a performance of Shakespeare's play helps expose the nuances of Celia and Rosalind's troubled relationship as the play moves past its erotically charged beginning. Additionally, applying

these insights to a particular production further reveals some of the practical strengths and weaknesses of queer theory when carefully applied to a specific creative work.

Yet, before addressing these concerns, one must consider the interplay of play and text, of page and stage to the critic's task. Neely's statement regarding the ability of a production to reinforce the homoerotic elements of Celia and Rosalind's relationship brings up a question about the role of performance in interpreting *As You Like It*. Neely recognizes the power of the theater to draw out meaning hinted at in the text; the issue arises when deciding whether any production of *As You Like It* deserves the same level of consideration as its originaive text, or if critical interpretations reliant on performance are just bastardizations of Shakespeare's foundational work. Performance theorist W. B. Worthen posits that both the play text and its performance history are two sets of historically located windows through which critics can glimpse Shakespeare's story (180). Neither is definitively authoritative, but each can provide a different perspective on various elements of the play. Since the text is inherently theatrical due to its genre, some aspects of the story only appear during performance. Thus, the thorough scholar can learn something unique about Shakespeare's story by examining particular instantiations of the play in performance while engaging the text in a critical debate.

These insights correlate extremely well with those of queer theory. Just as a person has no essential self against which to evaluate the absolute authenticity of actions or words, a play similarly lacks a privileged identity. Instead of worrying over a production's fidelity to the text, coherence must be found between the fractured loci of identity: the play text, the current production, and the play's performance history. These elements form the contextual framework to which any critical insights must be held accountable. Of course, as with individual identity, not everything will cohere absolutely, leaving striking tensions which may actually reveal more about a story than the areas where all critical opinions integrate perfectly.

Performance criticism's methodology of close analysis of elements of the theater also meshes extremely well with queer theory's emphasis on the performative nature of identity, as theorized by Butler. In this light, theater becomes a mimetic ritual, imitating reality for the audience's pleasure by playing out the process of performative identity formation in a fictionalized context. Theater demonstrates the ability of a person to appear as someone else entirely, just by altering their behavior, an illusion which is often strong enough to capture and hold an audience's attention for an hour or two. Queer theater scholar Alisa Solomon observes "Theater and queer theory challenge ideas of fixed identities. Both break through the seemingly impermeable walls of gender and sexual categories by unmooring them from the idea that they derive absolutely and inevitably from an original objective source" (Solomon 14). By emphasizing the contingency of these categories, both performance criticism and queer theory posit a performative self and suggest similar methods to better understand that self. A successful performance critique informs a successful queer critique and vice versa by focusing on the need to carefully study the intersection of speech, behavior, and performative context (historical or theatrical) to better understanding a character's desires and motivations. Further, if those desires make up the central aegis of identity, then understanding desire is the only way to truly understand a character. Thus, queer theory informed by performance criticism gains a solid set of methodological tools with which to dissect the construction of individuals both on and off the stage, in dramas both real and fictive.

Returning to the context of stage performance however, McAnuff's choice to bring out the homoerotic themes in *As You Like It* aligns him with a rich history of similar interpretations, though most productions typically focus on the Ganymede/Orlando relationship. This tradition goes all the way back to the play's original performances. At the time, Shakespeare's Rosalind was played by a boy actor. Shakespeare playfully draws attention to the actor's gender through Rosalind's musings in the epilogue that "If I were a woman I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleas'd me,

complexions that lik'd me, and breaths that I defied not" (18-20). The actor's condition that if he were female he would do these things reminds the audience of the complex layers of gender imitation being played out on stage before them. While the plot eventually affirms a heterosexual union between Rosalind and Orlando, the audience's knowledge that it is a boy playing Rosalind adds a homoerotic undercurrent to the entire performance as well as demonstrating a certain distinction between a person's biological sex and their social gender identity, a distinction of special interest to queer theory.

After an eighteen-year hiatus, theater was reinstated during the Restoration, and women were allowed onto the stage, changing the dynamics of the play again. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Rosalind's "disguise" became an excuse to put a woman in breeches on stage for the male clientele. Thus, the portrayal of Ganymede as realistically masculine was distasteful (Pittman). Helen Faucit, the most famous actress to play Rosalind in the eighteenth century, was renowned for her endowment of uncompromising femininity to Ganymede's character. Where other actresses emphasized "the boldness of the swagger and the impudence of the wit," Faucit never attempted to portray a complete illusion with Ganymede (Carlisle 66-67). Instead she maintained the identity of Rosalind no matter what clothes the character was wearing. The switch to a feminized Ganymede and more robust Rosalind dampens the homoerotic tension with Orlando and undercuts some of the more subversive *gender* politics of the play while simultaneously strengthening the work's *erotic* subversions; an uncompromisingly feminine Rosalind reinvigorated the homoerotic tension with Phebe when she reappeared in nineteenth century versions of the play and amps up the potential for a more interesting interpretation of Celia's role in the play.

In the twentieth century, several productions revisited Elizabethan staging practices and their homoerotic possibilities by putting on all-male versions of *As You Like It*, the most notable being the Cheek by Jowl performance directed by Declan Donnellan in 1991 and 1994 (Marshall 88).

Speaking of Adrian Lester as Rosalind, Paul Taylor writes in his review that “The scenes between Ganymede and Patrick Toomey’s excellent Orlando have a beautifully comic erotic tension and a sexual ambiguity that’s heightened because both players are men” (Taylor 316-17). While the females in this production were played by grown men, the parallels to Shakespeare’s day remain, parallels which also opened at least one critic’s eyes to the homoerotic potential of Celia and Rosalind’s friendship. Alan Sinfield notes that Celia “is plainly in love with Rosalind. While Rosalind frolics around with her various beaux, Celia stands to one side looking anxious, upset, and yearning” (qtd. in Traub 375). Sinfield’s revelation reinforces the potential for performances of Shakespeare’s play, no matter the era, to raise questions regarding the fixity of gender and erotic desire. Some subtext of homoeroticism and gender subversion seems unavoidable in a play about disguise, love, and eventually, marriage. In a play about love and marriage, a single-gendered cast is certain to cause homoerotic tension. In that sense, McAnuff’s recent production of *As You Like It* easily fits into a tradition of homoerotic readings of the play, to which McAnuff adds through his decision to characterize Celia.

Within this particular incarnation of Shakespeare’s play, McAnuff’s 2010 Stratford production augments the homoerotic tension between Cara Rickett’s Celia and Andrea Runge’s Rosalind in the text by utilizing blocking and speech inflection. This augmentation begins in the first few scenes where Shakespeare’s text, as already examined, provides plenty of opportunity to inject Rosalind and Celia’s friendship with hints at a deeper longing. McAnuff capitalizes on these opportunities. In her first scenes with Rosalind, Celia’s blocking demonstrates a close friendship with her cousin. The two friends stand near each other whenever other characters are on stage with them, demonstrating their special relationship and preference of each other’s company. Before Touchstone, the court fool, arrives, Celia and Rosalind converse back and forth before Celia kisses Rosalind twice on the cheek then wipes her nose on her cousin to remove the paint Rosalind

playfully applied there. Once Le Beau arrives to announce the wrestling, Celia grabs Rosalind's arm and the two walk in sync down the stage toward the center aisle. Still later, after Duke Frederick declines to reward Orlando, Celia and Rosalind nearly exit the stage hand in hand. These physical signs demonstrate the cousins' special friendship and deep emotional bond. Their physically affectionate behavior augments the textual evidence for their emotional bond, laying the groundwork for a homoerotic interpretation of their relationship.

In fact, the next scene provides provocative evidence that casts Celia and Rosalind's friendship in a distinctly homoerotic light. The two cousins ascend the stage from the vomitorium accompanied by steam, presumably having returned from a shower or trip to the spa together. The cousins wear only skimpy white towels as they discuss Rosalind's previous encounter with Orlando. They bicker, sitting on separate white chairs before Celia moves to join her cousin. The two hug, cuddle and act very physically affectionate, nearly on top of each other, on the single chair. From this behavior we can clearly see that the two are very comfortable with each other physically, fulfilling the criteria of physical intimacy, and from the spoken dialogue during the scene we can gather that the two display a high level of emotional bonding. Celia has her arm around Rosalind when Duke Frederick enters and proceeds to banish Rosalind from the court. While Rosalind is being accused of treason, Celia holds her cousin's hand until the Duke forces his daughter away, obviously upset at their solidarity. Once the Duke is finished, he leaves, and Celia moves to comfort Rosalind. Celia kisses the top of her friend's head and massages her arm; Rosalind clings to her cousin. While the cousins' behavior previous to this scene might be explained away as chastely homosocial, the combination of such persistent physical affection in intimate attire within a scene verbally laced with potent homoerotic allusions provides sufficient evidence to postulate that perhaps there is more to this relationship than merely platonic love. In addition, Celia's incessant initiation of physical contact supports the presence of her one-sided attraction to Rosalind.



The stage business during this scene also amplifies Celia's invocation of marriage to connect herself and her cousin. Immediately after Duke Frederick banishes Rosalind, he motions for his attendants to give Celia and Rosalind white robes with which to cover themselves (Scott 119). Notably, this is the only prominent use of white for these two characters before they participate in the wedding scene at the end of play. Celia and Rosalind's towels as well as their robes subtly support Celia's allusions to Juno's swans and marriage as she defends her cousin. Additionally, combining the above observations with the frequent kissing of the scene as Duke Frederick kisses Rosalind's head before Celia mimics her father only strengthens the parallels to marriage. These symbolic gestures, reinforced by the pair's hand holding and intense physical affection previous to and after the banishment, actualize the homoerotic tensions Shakespeare's text embodies. In a personal interview, Ricketts herself acknowledges that before Rosalind marries Orlando, "Celia is her other half", a descriptor itself loaded with strong connotations of marriage and commitment.<sup>10</sup>

However, two cracks appear in Celia's relationship with Rosalind, beginning with her cousin's assumption of the male identity, Ganymede. Celia is disheartened when Rosalind reveals her plan to run away from the court disguised as a boy. When asking "What shall I call thee when thou art a man?" Ricketts, playing Celia, pauses just briefly before "a man" and delivers those lines flatly with disdain (1.3.123). The prospect of Rosalind as a male annoys Celia and she is not afraid to show it. During their time in Arden, this disdain can be seen in Celia and Rosalind's distance from each other on stage. In contrast to their time in court, where Duke Frederick must roughly pull the two apart, in Arden, the two friends frequently stay separated: Ganymede roams the stage to interact

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<sup>10</sup> Notably, queer theory's assumptions give strong interpretive weight to an actor's intuitions about their character. After all, if identity is performative, then a person behaving like another individual is as close as anyone can ever be to actually *being* that person. So, in a sense, by repeatedly playing Celia, in some way, Ricketts has become Celia if only for a brief period of time and so gained intimate access to her character. Of course, identity is just as closed to the self as to others and any insights Ricketts gains are also unavoidably tied to her own identity and reinterpretation of those desires. Still, despite these setbacks, Ricketts' intimate access to this character makes her thoughts extremely valuable to this study.

with other characters like Orlando while Celia sits passively on the edge of the thrust. Celia clearly does not feel as close to the vulgar shepherd's swain as she did to her sweet Rose.

Yet, Celia appears to *only* distance herself when Rosalind acts as Ganymede, performing the role of a man. When the two are alone onstage and can safely interact as females, Celia again moves close to her cousin reaffirming their closeness and suggesting that Celia is primarily concerned about her cousin's assumption of a male identity. If Celia's affection for Rosalind is tied to the pair's same-gender status, then Ganymede is getting in the way of the relationship, prompting Celia to passively aggressively push for his dissolution through her choice to disassociate herself from him. Celia appears entirely uncomfortable with her cousin's performance as a youth, and seems to press Rosalind to return to her female role whenever she can.

Celia's patience also wanes whenever Rosalind engages the second source of tension in Celia and Rosalind's relationship: Orlando. While Celia had no competition for Rosalind's affections before the play began, the introduction of Orlando threatens her exclusive bond with Rosalind. Rosalind and Orlando first meet just before the wrestling competition. At that time, Celia acts quite cordially toward him, first encouraging Orlando to give up his dangerous plan to wrestle Charles, then praying that he stay safe. She does not notice that Rosalind is smitten by this young man until after Orlando beats Charles. Celia tries to get Rosalind to leave with her and is nearly successful. However, Rosalind runs back to interact with Orlando one last time. In that moment, Rosalind lets go of Celia's hand, leaving her cousin slightly upset at the turn of events. This indication of Rosalind's move toward a heteroerotic partnership may be what motivates Celia to act so physically affectionate in the subsequent spa scene and focus on the marriage images to stress her commitment to her cousin.

Celia's jealousy of Orlando strengthens in Arden. After speaking to Juliet Stevenson about her 1985 role as Rosalind, performance historian Carol Rutter relates that once Celia read the love

poem Orlando left for Rosalind she “sensed a friendship on the point of disintegration, but she wouldn’t let Rosalind go without a fight” (105-06).<sup>11</sup> While McAnuff’s production shows more at stake in these interactions than just friendship, Rutter brings attention to Celia’s discomfort at Rosalind’s interactions with Orlando. One illuminating moment occurs when Ganymede asks Celia to marry Orlando and his “Rosalind”. Celia jumps up, stuttering, “I cannot say the words” while looking quite distraught and unsure (4.1.128). After Ganymede’s saucy prompt, Celia hesitantly starts the mock service before falling silent as Ganymede’s “Rosalind” nearly kisses Orlando.<sup>12</sup>

This moment is particularly interesting as it marks a change from Shakespeare’s source. Lodge gives the suggestion to Alinda (Celia’s counterpart) who offers to “play the priest” and marry Ganymede and Rosader. At this suggestion, Ganymede “changed as redde as a rose” (81). Shakespeare’s change alters Celia’s portrayal substantially, indicating that it is she and not Rosalind who has difficulty with this mock marriage, begging the question of why this is so. Though Celia may be appalled at the lack of propriety of the situation, she knows Rosalind’s biological sex behind the gender veil, reducing the scandal of the match and suggesting there is something more to her reaction. If Celia feels threatened by her friend’s antics with Orlando and jealous at the affection Rosalind gives the man, then her reactions remain consistent with a homoerotic interpretation; Celia still longs for her cousin despite the masculine disguise and budding romance with Orlando.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Tellingly, Celia reads a love poem by Orlando about Rosalind telling tales “of violated vows / ‘Twixt the souls of friend and friend” (3.2.133-34). This passage illustrates Traub’s claim that, in Shakespeare, “Femme-femme love is thus figurable in terms not only of the always already lost, but the always about to be *betrayed*” (174, emphasis retained).

<sup>12</sup> The homoerotic tension introduced here between Ganymede and Orlando culminates later in the scene with a kiss behind an easel set up near the back of the stage, a kiss that throws the desires (or perceptivity) of Orlando into question. Celia reacts to the kiss with shock and disgust.

<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, a consideration of Celia’s words during the cousins’ first appearance onstage suggests another motive besides jealousy that is still compatible with a homoerotic interpretation of Celia’s desire. In response to Rosalind’s question about falling in love, Celia pleads with her friend to “love no man in good earnest, nor no further in sport neither, than with safety of a pure blush thou mayst in honor come off again” (1.2.27-29). Celia seems uncomfortable with the thought of her cousin loving a man, but is especially worried that affection will lead to dangerous circumstances, circumstances that may unavoidably hurt one or more parties involved. Celia’s current behavior could indicate that she sees her worst fears being realized as the previous joviality of Rosalind’s disguise fades as the emotional stakes run higher. At this point in the play, Ganymede is more of a stressor in not only Celia’s relationship to her

Yet, McAnuff complicates the audience's understanding of Celia's homoerotic attraction to Rosalind with his straightforward presentation of Celia's romance with Oliver. When Celia meets Oliver, her feelings for Rosalind seem to effectively vanish. Once Oliver appears in Arden and begins asking questions, Celia immediately takes charge of the situation, giving him directions then introducing herself and Ganymede. Upon meeting the youth, Oliver proceeds to tell the two of he and his brother's adventures with a lioness. Characteristically, Celia holds Rosalind's hand during the story, presumably still indicating Celia's special relationship with Rosalind. However, as the story continues and Rosalind gets more unnerved at Orlando's injury, Celia simultaneously becomes more intrigued by Oliver until she separates from her cousin complete. Left on her own, Rosalind faints, but Celia and Oliver fail to notice for a few seconds, caught up in each other's eyes. When she does realize what has happened, Celia rushes to revive Rosalind then begins to support her cousin to their dwelling offstage. However, following Oliver's observation of the authenticity of Rosalind's swoon, instead of Celia supporting Rosalind out, as expected, Celia exits arm in arm with Oliver, letting Rosalind totter ahead. In this instance, Celia acts extremely uncharacteristically. Previously so quick to initiate physical contact with her Rosalind at any opportunity, after meeting this man, Celia suddenly leaves Rosalind behind, agreeing to marry Oliver the next day. Celia appears perfectly content to marry Oliver, the man she met just the day before, despite her longstanding attraction to Rosalind, her friend since birth.

The finale does little to explain Celia's sudden change of heart. In fact, McAnuff's production complicates an easy resolution of Celia's disparate desires in the final wedding scene by juxtaposing further evidence of Celia's attraction to Rosalind with Celia's apparent acceptance of her marriage to Oliver. When Rosalind declares "from hence I go / to make these doubts all even" and

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cousin, but also to the feelings and longings of everyone involved in Rosalind/Ganymede's life, from Orlando to Phebe. Celia's current behavior may be motivated not by selfish desire, but altruistic care for the emotional health of all parties involved, herself included.

exits to change back into female attire offstage, Celia accompanies her (5.4.24-25). In the performance, Celia and Rosalind utilize the back exit to leave the stage then reappear together, walking down the carpeted aisle through the open passageway back towards center stage. As the two advance, they cling to each other much as they did at the beginning of the play in Duke Frederick's court. They walk in step with linked arms and even clutch each other's hands as they carry a single bouquet of flowers. Upon reaching the other couples, the two part ways and continue on to their respective partners.

Celia and Rosalind's closeness reaffirms their continuing bond as friends, but their physical behavior reasserts a homoerotic interpretation into the scene. Celia's presence during Rosalind's implied changing and the cousins' walk down the aisle together continue the homoerotic overtones identified in previous parts of the play. Furthermore, when the two separate, their actions mirror those of a father presenting his daughter to the groom at a wedding. As this is the only processional shown in the scene, Celia and Rosalind seem to be giving each other away to their respective male partners while still affirming their extraordinarily close bond, a scenario destabilizing any easy explanation of Celia's desires.

One explanation for Celia's odd behavior conceptualizes the entire finale as an artificial cultural construct intended to control sexual desire and channel it into the only form of expression acceptable to society: male-female marriage. Neely points out that the wedding scene shifts the tone seen throughout the rest of the play, claiming that "The highly formalized and ritualized enactment of the wedding hints that this is just yet another donning of roles" (127). Ricketts herself speaks of the entire relationship between Orlando and Rosalind as a "con" with Celia in the role of the witness. Even the marriage central to the play's plot is much less stable than would first appear.

The sudden appearance of Hymen, Greek god of marriage, to institute the unions illustrates this artificiality. As the only mythological figure who appears personally in the play, Hymen seems

slightly out of context when he unexpectedly appears. Speaking only twenty-four lines, he soon fades into silence after fulfilling his role. His textual insignificance fails to instill confidence in the institution he represents while performance details continue to support his artificiality. Notably, the god ascends the thrust flanked by a lioness and stag, two symbolic characters who previously appeared in the background of the set. The return of two flower-headed women to the farthest corners of the stage also accompanies Hymen's appearance. These prop characters' previous appearances were symbolic, and they maintained their distance from the other actors, augmenting the audience's conception of the play rather than significantly affecting the action. Hymen's association with these metaphoric, narratologically inert characters lends an air of artificiality and illusion to his entrance and the rest of the scene. If those he accompanies cannot meaningfully change the story, how are Hymen's marriages going to provide a satisfactory conclusion to the presented interplay of desire?

Within the text itself, Jaques further undermines Hymen's character. The would-be-fool puts forward doubts about the longevity of one of the marriages Hymen officiates. Despite the god's affirmation that Touchstone and Audrey "are sure together / as the winter to foul weather", Jaques predicts "thy loving voyage is but for two months victuall'd" (5.4.135-36, 191-92). Though Jaques is admittedly biased toward melancholy and pessimism, his presence throughout the play to see the progression of Touchstone's relationship situates him to provide an arguably more trustworthy analysis of the marriage than the out-of-place god who just appears on the scene to cement the match. Hymen's contingency to the scene and story, lack of a substantive character, and blind faith regarding an uncertain marriage undermine his authority and the surety of the marriages he comes to bless. Even the surest union between Rosalind and Orlando suffers from this situation; Ricketts again reaffirms the image of a con played on Orlando relating "by the time the marriage takes place there are a lot of people to witness so I'd say the con would be better". The entire

masque begins to seem more and more like a grand farce put on just for show without any real hope of permanence.

Several performance details further support the artificiality of the wedding scene. Though abiding by wedding tradition, the universal change in costuming of the main characters to white from the previous focus on tans and browns makes a striking contrast to the rest of the play. Increased intensity lighting also differentiates this scene from those previous as a glowing white heart in the style of Magritte's *The Malicious Sack* (1959) hangs from the ceiling inside an elaborate box constructed of leafy vines. Though the prop could symbolize a lantern through which true love shines, the box also shares a striking resemblance to a cage. In that case, the cage could represent the imposition of society's oppressive customs to control and contain the characters' desire, symbolized by the heart itself.<sup>14</sup> In order to counteract the powerfully disruptive forces of desire, society establishes explicit boundaries to contain intransigent erotic attraction and errant gender expressions. This sense of the surreal and the wish fulfillment of society undermines the legitimacy and longevity of the marriages and legitimizes the more complicated attractions of Phebe, Orlando, and Celia to Ganymede/Rosalind.<sup>15</sup>

However, another interpretation of the wedding scene exists that accounts for the seemingly dual affections presented in Celia and Rosalind's affirmation of love for each other and for their

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<sup>14</sup> Far more negative connotations than those I explain here exist for the painting this prop is based on. The use of "malicious" in the title implies that many of society's problems stem from this organ so often associated with love. This extra layer of meaning adds many more interpretations to an already ambiguous prop. (The production in general seems to be over-symbolic, further complicating an attempt to draw meaning from the set design.) Taking the lantern approach, the prop may mean that societal problems are being perpetuated by this series of marriages. Such problems may be put on display through these marriages. On the other hand, a negative interpretation of the heart seems to justify the leafy box being a cage. If so, the marriages are still oppressive but are intended to control the evils of the heart, redeeming them in a sense. This possibility relies on a dark characterization of desire (an interpretation I fundamentally disagree with) making marriage the lesser of two evils for society as a whole to endorse.

<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare himself does not present an entirely rosy picture of marriage or family in his plays. Romeo and Juliet's marriage lasts for just a few days before ending in tragedy. Among longer standing married couples like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Katherine and Petruchio, and Leontes and Hermione, none are shining examples of marital bliss. A closer examination of Shakespeare's work reveals that most of his fictional families consist of a single parent and a child or two who often do not relate to each other very well. Overall, Shakespeare's portrayal of family and life after marriage is quite negative, though this may be due to his own complex family life (Orgel "Prospero's Wife" 56-57).

male partners. In this understanding, Celia exemplifies a fluid understanding of sexual desire rooted in the Surrealist set design. McAnuff's production nearly overwhelms the viewer with references to Surrealist artist René Magritte's works. In this Arden, giant boxes with eyes from *The False Mirror* (1928) applied to each side and a disproportionate green apple three feet across reminiscent of *The Listening Room* (1958) descend from the theater's ceiling ("Webisode"). The melancholy courtier Jaques appears "dressed in a suit and bowler hat as if he has stepped out of. . . *The Son of Man* [1964]" (Nestruck). Some actors even haunt the stage with blooming flowers for heads like *The Great War* (1964) or appear as soldiers with canvas-covered faces like *The Lovers* (1928).

All these paintings emphasize epistemological uncertainty, a common theme in Magritte's works. The self especially is unknowable and inaccessible, a characterization which correlates with queer theory. But, in the context of an unknowable self, Celia's rapid change of affection is no longer as troubling. Arden becomes a place for self-discovery; "People are free here, as they are not in the nervous court of Duke Frederick, to realize their own potentialities" (*Riverside* 400). Just like Rosalind, though slightly later, Celia discovers the pleasures of heteroerotic interaction. Her malleable sexual desire cannot be defined as distinctly homoerotic no more than a picture of a pipe can be equated with the actual object.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Celia can solidify her heteroerotic relationship with Oliver while still holding onto her homoerotic attraction to Rosalind; both manifestations of Celia's desire can exist simultaneously.<sup>17</sup> Celia's decision to marry Oliver may represent her willing conformity to social pressures obsessed with containing sexual desire, yet, her marriage does not preclude continuing to express her attraction to Rosalind outside of society's influence. Her desire is untamable, and this marriage just provides another outlet for that passion, one authorized by society.

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<sup>16</sup> Magritte's painting *The Treachery of Images* (1929) demonstrates that objects and images are different. Magritte challenged detractors to try stuffing his pipe and smoking it before accusing him of lying.

<sup>17</sup> Celia could even have used Rosalind's masculine identity of Ganymede as a bridge between homo- and heteroerotic attraction. To maintain her relationship with Rosalind as Ganymede, Celia directed her attraction to a girl parading as a boy. This gender ambiguity may have prepared Celia to take the next step and love a more stably gendered man: Oliver.



Ultimately, no matter how it is interpreted, the decision to portray Celia with homoerotic affection towards Rosalind strengthens her character and deepens the plot of the play. Celia's constant presence during the wooing scenes between Ganymede/Rosalind and Orlando often seems unnecessary and awkward, and an argument purely relying on Celia's ability to reinforce Rosalind's feminine identity seems insufficient to justify her presence.<sup>18</sup> A homoerotic reading of their relationship, however, explains Celia's incessant presence both motivationally through her lasting affection toward her cousin and narratologically by positing her very personal investment in the onstage action.<sup>19</sup> The front-ending of the textual allusions to support this homoeroticism likewise becomes more comprehensible: a narrative strategy to establish Celia's motivations quickly before the play's plot stresses those loyalties. A perceptive director can capitalize on all of these factors in order to increase the audience's investment in Celia as a character and provide an obvious explanation for some of her curious statements and behavior.

Of course, a homoerotic interpretive framework for Celia occludes nearly as much as it reveals, especially in the context of her hasty marriage to Oliver. Yet, whether her marriage is seen as an embrace of multiple desires, a socially acceptable container for sexual expression, or just a delayed transition from an eroticized homosocial relationship to an authentically pursued heteroerotic one, the very existence (if only briefly) of that homoerotic attraction confronts

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Shapiro affirms that Celia's "function is to provide the performer playing her cousin with a focal point for reestablishing the presence of her female identity as Rosalind" (129). McAnuff's Celia does indeed perform this function through her extremely stable gender identity. Despite her words when planning the escape to Arden to "put myself in poor and mean attire, / And with a kind of umber smirch my face", Celia reappears in clothes nearly identical in quality to the ones she wore in the court, high heels included (1.3.111-12). When compared to the other women in Arden, Celia's actions stand out as the most persistently feminine: Rosalind spends the majority of the play disguised as a boy, Dalal Badr portrays a Phebe with very masculine features and a domineering stage presence, and Lucy Peacock's Audrey appears totally unaware of gender expectations, even sitting with legs splayed to which Touchstone admonishes "bear your body more seeming, Audrey" (5.4.68-69). Celia's uncompromisingly feminine actions serve to performatively position her as a major female presence in the play, so powerful in fact, that she even brings out her cousin's more feminine attributes despite Rosalind's disguise as Ganymede.

<sup>19</sup> In this light, Celia's purposeful feminine identity and her preference for that identity in Rosalind's character serves as an ironic perpetuation of societal gender norms. Through her behavior, Celia supports social boundaries of gender while rejecting similar categories for erotic desire when they serve to counter her interests.

audiences with questions about the fixity of sexual desire in a play already challenging categories of gender. In this sense, Celia serves to expand the play's vision of a queered human being, taking her place alongside Rosalind/Ganymede as a tribute to the ever-shifting character of human self-definition. Where Rosalind rebels against society's imposition of gender norms, Celia challenges conventional categories for erotic attachment, demonstrating that one can construct one's self, in some sense, as you like it. Ironically, Celia and Rosalind's offstage commentaries on identity unite in a way their onstage representations never can, but perhaps this mutual delight in challenging the limits of love and the nature of self is precisely why "never two ladies lov'd as they do" (1.1.112).

All these insights about desire's contingency and society's construction of boundaries, drawn from a careful study of Shakespeare's text and McAnuff's performance, mimic the discourse of queer theory, reinforcing the critical school's assumption that desire is the central, indefinable site on which performance constructs identity. Yet, the ambiguity of the finale, on both the page and the stage underlines the limits of this approach. Due to its radical reinterpretation of the self, queer theory leaves only the lens of behavior, actions and words, available for the critic to discern any character's desire. Yet, the light shed by a work's context significantly affects the accuracy and precision of this lens. Lacking information about the historical location of a work seriously impairs a queer critic's ability to draw meaningful conclusions about character desire, one of the theory's central concerns. For example, while homoerotic behavior may be identified in a work, next to nothing can be subsequently implied about a character's desire without plenty of corroborating evidence both within and without the text.

This distinction between homoerotic behavior and homoerotic desire is vital despite its frequent absence from queer commentaries. Too often an erotic relationship is posited in a text immediately following the identification of some homoerotic language with no regard for the context of the utterances. Queer theorists should be more cautious. While queer theory's methods

can produce many provocative insights into the ways that desire and boundaries interact in a text, when presenting a case of potentially non-heteronormative desire, the burden of proof is rightfully on the critic. A solid case must be made that such an interpretation is, if not the best framework to organize the relationship within, then at least an extremely productive one. Because so many other desires, such as a longing for conformity or social unity, can manifest as homoerotic behavior in certain contexts, the case for viewing such desire as a primary motivating factor for a character must be especially strong.<sup>20</sup>

Personally, I find that a single case of homoerotic desire, strongly demonstrable on textual and historical grounds, is more valuable than ten inferred instances of such with only circumstantial evidence of homoerotic language. As Traub says in regard to Shakespeare's oeuvre, "We do not need to laminate a *lesbian* presence *onto* Shakespeare's texts; once we begin to think historically about desires and practices, we can draw homoerotic meanings *out* of them. . . .it is less a question of queering the past than of discovering the terms by which the past articulated its *own* queerness" (40, emphasis original). A major part of discovering how the past articulates its own queerness is understanding that past on its own terms, vicariously inhabiting it through the role of a character in order to glean meaningful insights about their experience, struggles, and desires. To that effect, general studies of Renaissance texts, contexts, and their queer foibles are helpful in the process of understanding the world to be inhabited. However, the best and most practical insights are often drawn from focused, careful analyses of specific works in order to better understand a specific character in a specific context and draw connections between idealized individuals and real, historical people. Such a methodology is a more empirical than theoretical approach. Affirming this desire, Jonathan Goldberg wishes that his book *Sodometries* and its general study of male/male

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<sup>20</sup> There is also a reasonable mimetic argument for caution when making a case about homoeroticism. Since homoerotic desire is not as strong a motive for most humans as its alternatives, critics should consider those explanations inherently more likely and default their critical assumptions accordingly.

homoerotic desire “only serves as a beginning for investigations that I hope will follow from it, and that will offer more subtle and exacting readings, ones, I believe, that might transform utterly our sense of what Renaissance texts are about, where produced, and in whose interests” (23-24).

Exemplifying such “subtle and exacting readings” is precisely what this current study attempts.

Perhaps the most important benefit of this empirical approach is avoiding the biases a broad survey can bring. By focusing on a particular work and the roiling sexual tensions within it, a critic can better capture the diversities of human sexual experience, one narrative at a time. Whereas a brief survey of many literary works provides useful frameworks for thought, they tend to condense desire and its expressions in order for them to fit that schema, clouding the complexities of this fundamental aspect of the human condition to create more manageable generalizations. In an attempt to counter that, a more focused, specific, and careful study of particular texts can demonstrate which frameworks actually illuminate potential erotic experiences and which may just be too general or unsupported to be of any practical, critical use, relics of an interpreter’s bias held together by a brief textual survey.

Correspondingly, Celia’s character allows modern interpreters to discover a bit more about how Renaissance females might have experienced and traversed the fine line between homosocial affection and homoerotic longing. Celia also provides further support for a contingent view of desire which both controls and is controlled by human agency. Her character provides a helpful window into the past and the way real individuals may have “articulated their *own* queerness” when faced with similar circumstances of unrequited homoerotic affection for a close companion (Traub 40, emphasis retained). Such insights are invaluable as we continue to rediscover and piece together these important fragments of human experience in order to obtain a more complete picture of the history of sexuality. While large scale overviews may help predict the patterns, it is only by carefully

examining and placing each individual piece of the puzzle that we can ever hope to comprehend the whole.

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