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AGAINST THE STRAIGHTGEIST: QUEER ARTISTS, “SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND,” AND “TODAY'S LONDON”

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Against the *Straightgeist*:
Queer Artists, “Shakespeare’s England,” and “Today’s London”

I aim to document the performance of gender not so much in Shakespeare’s England as in contemporary England in relation to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Marlowe’s *Edward II*. I have chosen to focus on three moments of adaptations of the play by two British queer-identified authors, Derek Jarman and Philip Osment, and in two media—theatre and film. These liminal moments outline the semantic and ideological shift from “camp” to “gay” on to “queer.”

Cette étude envisage la manière dont les rôles sexués et le genre étaient vécus non seulement dans l'Angleterre de la Renaissance mais également dans l'Angleterre contemporaine, à travers le prisme des adaptations au théâtre et à l'écran de La Tempête de Shakespeare et d'Edward II de Marlowe. Sont dès lors éclairés trois moments-clés de ces adaptations par deux artistes queer, Derek Jarman et Philip Osment, qui esquissent le glissement sémantique et idéologique du « camp » en passant par la mouvance « gay » pour aboutir au « queer ».

1611 is a watershed date of sorts. It is the date usually ascribed to the first performance of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* but also the date of publication of John Florio’s Italian/English dictionary, which translates the “prostitute boy” or Italian *catamíto* as “one hired to sin against nature, an ingle, a ganymede” (Florio 88), as well as that of the famous Authorised version of the Bible by James I’s Biblical scholars. When they came to Chapter Six of the first epistle to the Corinthians, they encountered two Greek words, μαλακοί and ἀρσενοκοῖτα which could be associated with homosexuality. Alan Bray mentions that “the first [word] they translated as ‘effeminate,’ a word which then lacked the specifically homosexual connotations it was later to acquire, the second they translated by . . . a description colored by their disapproval: ‘abusers of themselves with mankind’” (Bray 13). Three hundred years later, the two Greek words were translated by “homosexuals.” The performance of gender in Shakespeare’s England is a topos in Shakespeare studies (Orgel 102-104), if only for the

fact that the Elizabethan stage provided an arena where the rhetoric of male friendship, cross-dressing, transvestitism, and changing gender definitions could be displayed. Anxieties about women's roles being played by men could be expressed, and, more largely, "cultural anxiety" (Garber 32) around the possibility that (sexual) identity was not fixed.

This spate of studies, which then proliferated in the late 1990s (e.g. Dollimore, Goldberg, Hammill, Holderness, Masten, Rambuss, Roche, Sinfield), set the stage for a general queering of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Critics identified homosexual characters in Shakespeare's plays, such as Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* and his namesakes in *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. Because *The Tempest* features a most unholy trinity—Prospero, Caliban, Ariel—and focuses on half-families or one-parent households—Sycorax/Caliban, Prospero/Miranda—as well as for other reasons which I have elucidated elsewhere (Zabus 2002), it has endured, more so than any other Shakespeare play, as a site of rewriting, appropriations, and negotiations that helped reshuffle priorities in the circulation of knowledge at the outset of the second millennium. I have chosen to focus on three moments of adaptations of *The Tempest* (as well as Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*) by two British queer-identified authors, Derek Jarman and Philip Osment, who outline the semantic and ideological shift from "camp" to "gay" on to "queer."

The issue of sexuality is part of the late Jarman's agenda as a militant campaigner against Heterosoc (or 'heterosexual society') and for gay freedom. His film *Caravaggio* (1987) concentrates on the artist's position as a homosexual during the Renaissance whereas *The Angelic Conversation* conjures up the romantic feelings between two young men on a summer afternoon and tenderly evokes Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Jarman's film adaptation of *The Tempest* (1979) is set within the quintessentially British confines of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, not so incidentally, Shakespeare's county. In the powdery Georgian wing of the Abbey, filled with strange relics, curios, and paneled walls scrawled with alchemical and cabalistic symbols, a seductive Prospero with Beethoven features (Heathcote Williams) is busy hatching vengeance against his usurpers. The rather sedate Miranda of *The Tempest* is played by Toyah Willcox, who is associated with British popular, street culture, and punk sensibility. Prospero is a peevish master to Caliban (Jack Birkett), a grimy-toothed lecher greedily sucking raw eggs and rubbing his crotch, and to Ariel (Karl Johnson), an anxious boiler-suited worker, who often looks like a future-shocked zombie contemptuous of the "meat" of the human body.

That the staging of events takes place in Prospero's wide-screen cranium confirms him as a heliocentric arch-magician of the screen, who here conjures up James I as the author of *Daemonologie* or John Dee, Elizabeth I's magician, who had already enthralled Jarman's imagination in his *Jubilee* (1978), for he revisits the Virgin Queen 400 years before, as her magus escorts her through time into the contemporary devastation of 1970s punk London. The homoerotic complicity between Prospero and Ariel comes to

the fore when Ariel's line about Ferdinand—"The King's son have I landed by himself" (I, 2: 221)—is followed by a meaningful chuckle that suggests that both master and slave could "share" Ferdinand.

A flashback reveals Caliban and Ariel being perversely enthralled to the witch of Algiers, portrayed as a white, ample, naked, and grotesque Sycorax (Claire Davenport), smoking a hookah and, in a descending shot, guiding her left nipple to the greedy mouth of a grown, naked, drooling Caliban. After savagely pushing her progeny away, she is then seen pulling a long chain at the end of which a nude, terrorized Ariel gropes toward her, to Caliban's sadistic amusement, before collapsing at her feet amid peals of her raucous laughter. The image of the suckling Caliban provides Kate Chedgzoy with the cover for her *Queer Children* (1995) but this scene is not so much queer as it is campy. Camp reaches unprecedented heights with the burlesque underclass trio of Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, who evoke via their language and costume, respectively, the butler, the cook, and the sailor, that is, lower-class male occupations, which hint at the classes exploited by Prosperous British society. More largely, Caliban is part of a fashionable, "politically correct" array of what I might call, distorting Frantz Fanon, the "wretched of Europe": women, the underclass, gays, the disabled (interestingly, Jack Birkett is a blind mime-actor).

Unmistakably, Jarman has created a homoerotic aura about the Stephano/Trinculo pair. In the June 1976 draft of *The Tempest*, Jarman had written in longhand beside "Misery acquaints a man with strange bed-fellows" (II, 2: 38) that "Trinculo and Caliban are fucking." If they are not overtly homosexual in the final draft, Trinculo and Stephano are campy in the sense in which camp is enacted through "gesture, performance, and public display" (Dynes 189). This is the point of articulation where Shakespeare's "insubstantial pageant" (IV, 1: 155) becomes ousted by the art of *flaunting*, a quintessentially camp verb, which has also been applied to butch-femmes and to drag queens (Case 282-99), the word "drag" harking back, in one interesting etymological speculation, to slang for "coach" or "cart," used in early European festivities, and to cross-dressing during New Year's processions when the Fool's King, a queen-goddess, or the goat-king Puck was pulled in a cart (Grahn 95-96).

In Jarman's film, camp is Stephano's and Trinculo's very essence, from the shrill delivery of their lines to their constant laughter and frivolity, to their fetishistic fascination with the frippery they come across. In her 1964 seminal essay, Susan Sontag had described camp as a "certain mode of aestheticism . . . one way of seeing the world . . . not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice" (Sontag 275; Pelegrini 168-93). In that sense, Jarman's late 1970s camp is rooted in style and artifice and is only tenuously related to the political camp of the 1990s. The highest *degree of artifice* is reached when Trinculo exchanges his sailor's outfit for a corselet and a feathery hat while Caliban lovingly hugs him. During the nuptials, Trinculo completes his transformation by putting on a see-through gauze crinoline that reveals his male nakedness underneath. In a very apt

“disguise that fails” (Core 9), Trinculo has become a female cross-dresser. Despite camp’s transvestitic capacity to assimilate dominant culture, Trinculo’s impersonation remains securely screwed to Caliban’s failed conspiracy against Prospero and this temporary lapse into an “excess of femininity” is ultimately ridiculed.

If one accepts Judith Butler’s definition of drag as “an effort to negotiate cross-gendered identification” and to “allegorize heterosexual melancholy” (Butler 235-36), Trinculo-in-drag points to the sexually unperformable, which is performed instead as gender-identification, thereby comforting rather than eroding heterosexuality. However, camp, as in gay male theater, remains “a means of signaling through the flames” (Davy 245), even if in a tokenistic way. Jarman more vigorously fans the fire of camp, bringing it to a climax, during the nuptials of Ferdinand and Miranda. This finale indeed gives him the opportunity to present the heterosexual wedding masterminded by Prospero as a fossilized event against the buoyancy of camp. The original fertility masque, which Shakespeare later included on the occasion of Elizabeth Stuart’s marriage to the Elector Palatine, here gives way to what might approximate a Jonsonian anti-masque. Already in the Jacobean context, Caliban represented “the unruly forces of English society—rowdies and malcontents who undermined the ideal unity and harmony of James’s body politic” (Vaughan and Vaughan 6). Although in the late 1970s Jarman had not yet put “camp into campaigning,” as OutRage! claims it did outside of Bow Street Police stations in London, infamous for its connections with Oscar Wilde’s trials, he is suggesting that what disturbs the unity and harmony of Elizabeth II’s body politic is precisely the new malcontents of the late twentieth century, i.e., queers. The nuptials are rounded off with the perennial Elizabeth Welch, crooning “Stormy Weather” under confetti showers while sailors hug each other by the waist while swirling in a traditional hornpipe dance. Here Jarman’s camp draws on the consciously artificial techniques of the Renaissance masque and imitates the Hollywood musical revue. The sheer flaunting of camp identifies this film as a cultural artifact from the late 1970s in England, where homosexuality is still confined to an apolitical philosophy of campy excess.

Philip Osment’s play *This Island is Mine* was first performed at the London Gay Sweatshop in 1988, one decade after Jarman’s *Tempest*, when Margaret Thatcher’s Government had issued anti-lesbian-and-gay laws and particularly Section 28 of the Local Government Act, which laid down that:

- (1) a local authority shall not:
 - (a) promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality;
 - (b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a *pretended family relationship* by the publication of such material or otherwise;
 - (c) give financial or other assistance to any person for either of the purposes referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of treating or preventing the spread of disease. (qtd Osment 1989, xii; my emphasis)

The idea of pretence is, of course, used in contradistinction with the “real.” By foregrounding pretended families, that is, households headed by lesbians or gay men, Osment’s play can be seen as politically revoking Section 28. The newspaper headlines read aloud in the first scene of Osment’s play capture the ideological climate of London in the late 1980s, a decade and a half after the American-inspired Gay Pride movement swept over London: “DON’T TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO BE GAY!,” “GOVERNORS TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT HEALTH AND MORALS” (Osment 1988, 86). *This Island’s Mine* contains the staging of *The Tempest* and takes its title from Caliban’s resisting claim of the island’s ownership (I, 2: 331). By queering a Black Caliban, Osment raises questions about “the postcolonial body,” which is no longer where it was supposed to be, i.e. on African, Australian or Caribbean soil, where, incidentally, Caliban had the most durable career, but back in England. It soon appears that Caliban’s reclaiming of the island usurped by Prospero is read as the proud reclaiming of the I-land of the queer body. The queer body is, as Martin tells his friends in scene 2, poised between a past of shame and guilt and a present ridden with AIDS, although neither Martin nor anybody in the play is a PWA (a Person With AIDS):

I was filled with self-disgust.
 Then I discovered hope.
 Pride.
 I came to see that my body was mine,
 To do with as I saw fit
 And guilt belonged to the past.
 . . .
 Then, from somewhere, comes this disease
 And they use it to say,
 “Didn’t we tell you?
 It’s divine retribution.
 Look where your behaviour has got you!” (86)

By casting AIDS as “divine retribution,” Martin does not only refer to the general ideological climate in England and the USA at the time but also to the fin-de-siècle apocalyptic sermonizing which already characterized discourse around syphilis at the end of the nineteenth century. As if to defy end-of-century hysterical epidemics, Larry Kramer’s American play *The Normal Heart* (1985), which represents gay men with AIDS, was staged continuously in New York City from 1985 to 1988, incidentally the date of publication of Osment’s play. As is clear from Martin’s talk, AIDS has a genealogy of shame and “that shame is produced as the stigma not only of AIDS, but also of queerness, where the latter is understood through

homophobic causalities as the cause and manifestation of the “illness” (Butler 233).

The stigmatisation of the queer body is reinforced by the atmosphere of suspicion, which reeks of witch-hunting. The restaurant’s assistant chef, Mark Leigh, is given the sack after coming out to the Manager as Selwyn’s boyfriend. Interestingly, on 5 June 1988, *The Sunday Telegraph* published an article—“Is there a Homosexual Conspiracy?”—which is imbued with the language of suspicion and anxiety reminiscent of anti-semitic rhetoric. Early in the play, Miss Rosenblum, a Jewish retired piano teacher warns her tenant Martin, in her Viennese accent, of potential scapegoating, thereby linking Nazism with what Nicholson Baker has called the *straightgeist* (6), which also echoes Monique Wittig’s *straight mind*: “Last time, Mr Martin,/ We (Jews) were the pestilence,/ Now you people are spreading the plague” (88). The reference to AIDS as “plague,” a word variously used in *The Tempest* as a retributive cataclysm (e.g., I, 2: 363) is not innocent since Sontag diagnosed AIDS as “illustrating the classic script for plague” (Sontag 1990, 51).

Osment addresses the issue of the regulation of sexuality by introducing the spectator to variations on the theme of the “pretended family” by denouncing the “real” family as an innocent site of health, happiness and normality. A spectacular example is provided in Martin’s marriage of convenience to Marianne, a Southern belle, who “[e]scaped to England to become a dyke/ Away from the persistent scrutiny of her North Carolina family’ (89), which, however, has many a skeleton in its closet. Indeed, Marianne finds out that her childhood friend, Jody, is her half-sister, the daughter to her father, Stephen, and his black nanny, Berta, in 1949. Osment blends the issues of “health and morals,” which the British Government had brandished as the twin champion causes against queers, by exposing Stephen as an unscrupulous man, who sent unscreened blood to the Third World, thereby contributing to the spread of AIDS, the “disease” alluded to but not spelled out in clause (2) of Section 28. Incidentally, the threat of contamination, which, in the Renaissance, concerned the aristocratic bloodline, is here extended to the postmodern anxiety around blood transfusion, the bite of the needle as in fin-de-siècle vampirism.

As Jody tells of her relief upon finding out that Marianne is a lesbian living with her Black lover Debbie and the latter’s son, blackness and queerness are seen as two stances underwriting normality. By having the parts of a lesbian and her son, Dave, played by Black actors, Osment revises the postcolonial paradigm as in Jonathan Miller’s contemporaneous London “po-co” production of *The Tempest* (1988), where Black actors play the part of Caliban and Ariel, or Canadian Lewis Baumander, who cast Caliban and Ariel in 1987 as Haida Indians. By mentioning, however briefly, “the au pairs out with their infant charges” (116) in St James’s Park, Osment hints at the problematic issue of childcare in heterosexual households. He then offsets it by showing Dave well integrated in a lesbian-

headed household and ready to face up to queer-bashing and other hostilities.

Another variant on the pretended family includes Martin who, living on his own, is joined by his nephew Luke who has run away from home and compulsory heterosexuality. Luke's unexpected visit triggers off Martin's memories of a gay rally in Hyde Park where Luke's parents saw Martin by chance and shielded "the child's face from the sight" (94) of his queer uncle in drag with ostrich feathers. Drag and camp, "invariably the weapon of the underdog" (Lucas 115), are here marginalized and remembered as relics from the past. If Osment fails to put "camp into campaigning," he takes care to locate the rally Martin remembers between the "march" and the "parade," that other "insubstantial pageant." Martin cannot help seeing Luke's taking shelter with him as a form of poetic justice redressing the wrongs of this "little nuclear family—Husband,/ Wife,/ And child" (94) who had banished him once for fear of a potentially harmful contamination.

Another pretended family is the gay-headed household of Mark Leigh and his black lover, Selwyn, the Black Caliban of the play. Mark's unfair dismissal from his job prompts Selwyn to find out about Mark's rights and secure a Library copy of *Gay Workers: Trade Unions and the Law*. Just as he thought he had "made it in a white man's world" (98), Selwyn, while taking a short cut home through a white, posh neighbourhood, is apprehended by three white policemen. They give him a vicious beating for being "a black pansy" (98), thereby presenting racism and heteropatriarchy as the Law's twin oppressors of minority queerness. Selwyn then reintegrates the lower-class, Black neighbourhood of his childhood and gets reconciled with his homophobic brother. The Selwyn-Mark love relationship is not dissolved but suspended as if binary paradigms around race and gender needed to be reassessed before giving the interracial gay relationship a fresh start.

The performance of *The Tempest* is the device that brings together the play's disparate vignettes of everyday life and all the various characters on the first night. Although the Director repeatedly stresses during *Tempest*-rehearsals that "Prospero is the hero,/ Not Caliban" (91), the main protagonists of Osment's play are the Calibans of the island. The working classes, the ethnic "riff-raff" (119) and sexual minorities now claim as theirs the United Kingdom with its trade unions, closed down factories, its racist and homophobic police but also its proffered multicultural landscape. Through his rigging of Caliban into racist stereotyping of "raw physicality and sex" (91), the Director emerges as the true Prospero of the play who forces Selwyn, a British-born Black, to speak with a "West Indian accent" (115) and laments under his breath: "God why have I got the only Black actor/ who doesn't know how to use his body?" (91). By failing to get Caliban "right," Selwyn shows the limits of Prospero's power and dexterity. Already in *Les Nègres*, Genet had displaced the camp critique from homophobia to racism, by having Black stand in for queer. Osment goes

beyond Genet by colliding Black and queer in the Caliban-figure. Osment also hints at the encounter between black and white trash queer by having Selwyn and Luke share Mark. The play's focus on young Luke as "white trash" also gives the lie to a certain elitism within British gay activism. This elitism got crystallized in the Gay Rights' Association, Stonewall, which, on 5 April 1993, was to protest against the 1967 decree against sexual offenses in replacement of the Labouchère Amendment Act, on the very premises of Cadogan Hotel, where Oscar Wilde had been arrested one century earlier. Possibly, Luke's future is "unknown" (120) in the sense that the kind of gender insubordination envisaged here is still beyond society's future imaginings of itself and of its Others.

While Michael Warner has shown in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993) that "the gay individual is not a diasporic subject" (xii), Alan Sinfield has likewise observed that "instead of dispersing, we [homosexuals] assemble. . . . And at least we can't be told to go back to where we came from, as happens to racial minorities in Britain. Conversely though, it makes us the perfect subversive implants, the quintessential enemy within. . . . It is a kind of reverse diaspora that makes our subcultures hybrid" (Sinfield 280-81). One might, however, counter-argue that, as homosexuality continues to be pathologized as a "disease" that can be "cured," the Prospero-like forces' prescription of a return to an alleged normalcy is a way of telling gay people to go back where they came from. Luke's "unknown future" is a moment of liminality, that is, a moment where identity and sense of belonging are suspended and deferred. His future is queer.

Derek Jarman moves several notches up in his political campaigning and his anger, exacerbated by the ravages of AIDS, which were to lead to his premature death, by dedicating his *Queer Edward II* (1991) to the "repeal of all anti-gay laws, particularly Section 28." Shakespeare being more conservative than Marlowe in his willful misinterpretation of the 15th century to bolster Tudor dynastic, Jarman had no trouble excavating the fourteenth-century, thirteen-year-long love affair between Edward II and the low-born Gascon Piers Gaveston, which had been "hiding behind history's jockstrap" (110). In this version "improved by Derek Jarman," their love is "naturalized" (Jarman is writing *Modern Nature* as he is directing the film) by gauging it against the Earl of Kent's tirade about same-sex desire between such illustrious figures as Alexander the Great and Hephaestion, Hercules and Hylas, Achilles and Patroclus, the Roman Tully and Octavius, "Grave Socrates, wild[e] Alcibiades" (84; I, 4: 397). To Marlowe's list, Jarman adds "other Royal queers: William Rufus, the sons of Henry I . . . , Henry II, and Richard Cœur de Lion" (70).

The play is strewn with hints that the historical Edward was forced by the demands of kinship into the heterosexual marriage bed. Deserted by her husband's affection, as is obvious in the unsatisfactory bedroom scene, Queen Isabella (played by Tilda Swinton, who co-wrote the film) muses on her native France, which she left to marry Edward, "[f]or never doted *Jove*

on *Ganymed*,/ So much as he on cursed Gaveston" (I,4: 180-81). Tellingly, the dismayed Queen asks Mortimer: "Is it not queer that he is thus bewitched?" (38). *Ganymede* belongs in with *bugger*, *ingle*, *catamite* or *sodomite* to the long list of predecessors to the late nineteenth-century medical term *homosexual* without being "synonymous with homosexuality alone" (Bray 14). Even though Bray's account has been nuanced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who is more concerned with "the entire male homosocial [Renaissance] spectrum" (90), "bugger" and "sodomite" were certainly in general use, sodomy being also a heterosexual sin and "sodomites" becoming "mollies" in the early eighteenth century, with its "molly-houses" that provided the *bed*, so lacking in Shakespeare's time as a site of intercourse and companionship. Jarman meant Edward and Gaveston to be more physical than in Marlowe's play and to display the physicality of their relationship in various locations: on the throne, where Gaveston falls asleep on Edward's lap, on the bed when playing cards with the Earl of Kent, or in bed.

Jarman sought to contemporize *Edward II* by having the cast wear 1990s dresses, yet taking care not to portray Edward or Gaveston as "the limp-wristed lipping fags so beloved of tabloids" (30). He had them work out with gym youths on blue training mats; Prince Edward watches a nude rugby scrum; and Edward and Gaveston dance in the spotlight to Annie Lennox's lyrics. Rather than being a haven of companionship and vibrant sexuality, the ultimate bed in Marlowe's play was a feather bed, where the gaunt and ailing Edward had been placed and stomped to death with a table on top of him to prevent bruises, after he had been forced to stand ten days in the sewer of Killingworth Castle, up to his knees in water and filth, while someone nearby was beating a drum to make sleep impossible. Jarman's ending is twofold: he envisages, after Ralph Higden's rendering of Edward's death "Cum vero ingito inter" (roughly translated "with a poker up his arse" [118]), as a murder seen as premonition, as we see Edward's tormentor Lightborn destroying the King "with the red hot poker" (160). In the second ending, "Lightborn takes the poker and throws it into the water. He comes over to Edward and kneels and kisses him" (162).

Kissing on stage or in public may help "shatter the epistemic blindness to an increasingly graphic and public homosexuality" (Butler 233). Yet, kissing was, in the 1990s, still prohibited by Clause 25, the criminal justice bill, which attempted "to recriminalize three areas of consensual gay sex, among them cruising and kissing in public. It could also lead to the closing of all gay bars" (Jarman, qtd Grundman 24). Interestingly, 1991, the date of *Queer Edward II*'s first release coincides with the Mauritian playwright Dev Virahsawmy's *Toufann*, a postcolonial rewrite of *The Tempest*, which sketches a homosexual encounter between Ferdjinan and Aryel. Yet, the queerness of their relationship is put under erasure. While the robot Aryel acknowledges that "physical contact disrupts the balance of his chips" (30) and they almost kiss in the bathtub, Virahswamy censors himself. *Almost but not quite*. They are called "twin brothers" and their homosexuality is

sanitized. The audience is assured that Aryel is “without sex” (29) and Ferdjnan is “impotent” and not interested in “sexual pleasure.” Also, Virahsawmy’s portrayal of Aryel as blond and blue-eyed (like the actor in Walling’s London production) intimates that homosexuality is believed to be an Aryan phenomenon unlikely to contaminate “wholesome” Mauritian society.

1991 is also the date of Derek Jarman’s canonization as a saint—“St Derek of Dungeness of the Order of Celluloid Knights”—by the lesbian/gay collective, *The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence*. The collective hints at an assimilatory “gayness,” before the advent of queerness, which is a term that “appeals to a younger generation who wants to resist the more institutionalized and reformist politics sometimes signified by ‘lesbian gay’” (Butler 228). Also, Butler’s “epistemic blindness” can be extended to a form of colour-blindness that erases Black homosexuality (and female homosexuality) in what remains a predominantly white, male movement, as is obvious from watching Jarman’s OutRage boys, Edward II’s heirs. Ironically, England, with its recent past of prohibitions against homosexuality was to scrap anti-gay laws in its five Caribbean territories in 2001.

In the move against the *straightgeist*, away from “camp” on to “gay” and “queer,” the most significant question raised by queer artists and which still needs to be addressed is whether gender itself could not be considered a form of apartheid.

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