

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how sexual transgression was represented onstage in three Portuguese theatre productions from the late 1990's; the Teatro da Comuna *Medida por Medida* (1997), the Teatro Nacional Dona Maria II *Rei Lear* (1998), and the Teatro Nacional São João *Noite de Reis* (1998). It analyses performative mechanisms for the representation of sexual transgression and contrasts them with those of the dramatic text. It also sought to test this hypothesis: the greater the autonomy of the performance text from the written text, the wider the possibilities for the representation of sexual transgression.

The theoretical approach is at an intersection between queer, gender and performance criticism. De Marinis' notion of the "performance text" is here used to describe how different systems of staging create theatrical meaning and to signal distinctions between the dramatic text and theatrical performance. Judith Butler's notion of the "enabling disruption", which points to processes of incoherence and discontinuity in the relationship between body, gender and sexuality, underpins the thesis' understanding of what constitutes sexual transgression. However, a methodological distinction is maintained between sexual transgression as gender transgression and sexual transgression in terms of sexuality as the thesis argues that the two are often inadvertently conflated in critical understandings of sexual transgression.

Each production is analysed in two separate chapters of the thesis. The first three chapters deal with gender issues. Chapter II: *Exploring the Other Side: The Performance of Gender in Twelfth Night*, analyses the hybridity of the cross-dresser and how the actors/actresses playing them negotiated cultural notions of masculinity and femininity. It contrasts instances of cross-dressing in the dramatic text with performative examples of extra-textual cross-dressing. Chapter III: *Taking the Woman's Part: The Problem of Misogyny in King Lear* argues that the demonisation of Goneril and Regan is part of a wider misogynistic bias in the play and examines performance strategies which have been used to challenge this. Chapter IV: *Putting on the Destined Livery: Actresses Play Isabella in Measure for Measure*, analyses how social change intersects with the representation of sexual transgression. It notes a change in conceptions of the role of Isabella and analyses the way wider contact between theatrical cultures has facilitated this.

The next three chapters revisit the same productions, but from the perspective of sexuality. Chapter V: *Time Out, Space Beyond and the Other Body: Queer Presence in Twelfth Night*, analyses how productions have signalled transgressive sexual desires through the evocation of a time, place and physicality distinct from that of the fiction of the dramatic text. Chapter VI: *We'll Strive to Please You Every Day: Prostitution as Theatrical Metaphor in Measure for Measure*, recasts the early modern metaphor of theatre as a form of prostitution to see what contemporary representations of prostitution might tell us about the theatres that have produced them. Chapter VII: *A Bastard Art: Theatrical and Sexual Transgression in King Lear*, considers the porosity of theatre's boundaries with other art forms as well as its own internal boundary between text-based and physical, improvisational forms. It also analyses the sexualised figure of Edmund the bastard and how productions which have foregrounded fluidity between art/media forms represent Edmund differently as a result