

Foreword

Every doctoral thesis contains within it the shadows of other theses not written. It passes through several transformations before settling on its final scope and focus. The initial project for this thesis sought to apply critical understandings of transgression and metamorphosis to a selection of Shakespearean texts and reflected two important influences. The first was the analysis of transgression in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986) and the second, more generally, the work of the English cultural materialists. In the case of the former, Stallybrass and White's exploration of categories of transgression such as inversion, demonisation and hybridisation seemed a productive starting point for an analysis of Shakespearean transgression across the demarcations of genre. In the case of the latter, the work of the cultural materialists offered exciting possibilities for dissident readings of the Shakespearean texts which included a strong emphasis on questions of gender and sexuality.

Nevertheless, although this initial formulation helped to focus my reading for the thesis, it soon came to seem too vast a research area. The idea behind coupling transgression with metamorphosis had been to encourage a certain amount of cross-fertilisation between the two terms. This would enable, on the one hand, a more theatrical approach to transgression and, on the other, a more political understanding of dramatic metamorphosis. One term also seemed to suggest the other. If transgression involved crossing over a limit or boundary, a transformation was implicit in this action which necessarily suggested metamorphosis. Similarly, metamorphosis suggested at least the possibility of transgression. However, while I found critical discussion of Shakespearean transgression vital and engaging, I found existing critical work on

metamorphosis in Shakespeare rather uninspiring. Additionally, I came to feel that what I wanted to write about metamorphosis could be conveyed within an exclusive focus on transgression. Therefore, I decided to concentrate solely on Shakespearean transgression. Even then, it was necessary to narrow down the scope of the thesis to particular forms of transgression. My preliminary work had focused on questions of gender, sexuality and cultural difference with the support of critical work in gender, queer and post-colonial theory. At that point, I decided to privilege specifically *sexual* transgression, although the post-colonial continued to haunt the project in the form of the intercultural, which a thesis located between two cultures inevitably invokes.

This process of selection in turn prompted what became the major transformation in the project. The status of a doctoral thesis as an intervention in the public realm has always been an important concern for me and analysis of the contemporary uses made of Shakespeare is central to this. The initial text-based approach of the doctorate appeared to be side-stepping the important questions such a concern raised. So, with a certain amount of trepidation, I broached with my supervisor the idea of changing the focus from a text-based approach to one that analysed contemporary Portuguese performances of the plays from the 1990's. To her credit, my supervisor endorsed what was, at this stage, something of a leap into the unknown. My colleagues didn't bat an eyelid when my first faltering attempts at performance analysis were presented to them and, indeed, offered much encouragement. Thus, the focus of the doctoral thesis became, and remained, the performative mechanisms whereby sexual transgression was signalled in contemporary Portuguese performances of Shakespeare.

Even when such methodological decisions have been made, every doctoral thesis is to a very great extent dependent upon the sources that are available. At the beginning of the project, I had little idea how much of a central concern this was to become over

the period in which this doctoral thesis was written. Performance research in Portugal can be a disheartening task. Often few documents exist as a result of a tendency to see performance as ephemeral and therefore not archive material. If I had gone any further back than the 1990's, for instance, there would have been little material available on video recordings. Moreover, criteria for keeping some documents and not others are often arbitrary. Documents that were available six months previously mysteriously disappeared from the archives never to be seen again. The main national theatre, the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II (TNDM), without warning, simply closed its archives for a year in the middle of the project. The quality of the documentation available is also irregular. The videotape of the TNDM *Rei Lear*, for example, had the sound missing for two thirds of the performance, an incomprehensible piece of negligence for a national theatre. Such problems are compounded by a general lack of understanding of the value and purpose of performance research amongst theatre companies. Even a simple request to the Porto-based, publicly-funded Seiva Trupe theatre company for the name of the translator of their *Macbeth* was met with thinly-veiled hostility and a refusal to divulge such information to "the public". During the writing of the thesis, I was constantly reminded of the theatre academic Eugénia Vasques launching a CD-Rom several years ago on World Theatre Day with a barrage of criticisms of those who had not responded to her invitation to participate. At the time, such criticisms had seemed excessive, but after completing this thesis I must admit that I can only endorse her angry frustration. Balancing such moments of exasperation, fortunately, were organisations like the Universidade de Lisboa's 'Centro de Estudos de Teatro', which is patiently and meticulously building an archive of available theatre material in Portugal and compiling a database which includes very valuable information about performances of Shakespeare in Portugal.

Such difficulties did, nevertheless, prompt solutions which taught me that performance research encourages the search for a creative methodology of its own. To combat deficiencies in existing documentation, for example, personal memory was an invaluable resource. The fact that the productions were relatively recent (although all those interviewed had difficulty remembering details even after such a seemingly short time period), enabled a consistent focus on the human dynamics of performance. Here again, with the exception of Paula Mora, the TNDM stands out negatively. The actresses Maria Amélia Matta and Lúcia Maria made no attempt to reply to my several requests for interview, as if such ‘diversions’ did not form part of their work as actresses at the main, again publicly-funded, national theatre. However, another publicly-funded national theatre, the Teatro Nacional São João (TNSJ) in Porto, and the Lisbon-based independent company Teatro Comuna were exemplary in this respect. In the case of Comuna, the fact that no video recording of their *Medida por Medida* existed meant that writing about the production would have been impossible without the willingness of actresses Carla Chambel and Cristina Cavalinhos to talk at length about their performances. The TNSJ also did their best to facilitate contacts for interview. As a larger organisation, these interviews did take longer to materialise, but when they did take place, both Nuno M. Cardoso and Micaela Cardoso spoke articulately and thoughtfully about their performances.

If every doctoral thesis is inevitably a learning experience, there is one final piece of advice that I would want to pass on to those considering doing theatre research in Portugal. That piece of advice is to balance persistence and determination with an acceptance of the inevitability of some ‘swerving’. Often, you start with a clear idea of what you want to do, but for some reason this becomes more difficult than you thought it would be. Sometimes insistence is enough to achieve what you want, and all those

who undertake performance research should be stubborn enough to persist in the face of indifference or hostility. However, sometimes it is more productive to take a step back from what you intended to do and try to approach the same idea from another angle. In other words, if at first you don't succeed, try swerving. Paulo Eduardo Carvalho introduced me to Virginia Woolf's well-known review of Tyrone Guthrie's *Twelfth Night* which consolidated, for me, this notion that sometimes not being able to approach something directly might not necessarily be a bad thing.¹ In this instance, Woolf had not liked Lopokova's performance in the play, but had to find a way of writing publicly

¹ Virginia Woolf on *Twelfth Night*, directed by Tyrone Guthrie at the Old Vic Theatre, London, from *The New Statesman*, 30th September, 1933. Woolf wrote the review in the first place to please her friend Geoffrey Maynard Keynes, who was married to Lopokova. I first encountered the notion of "swerving" in Stephen Greenblatt's chapter "Fiction and Friction" in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). Greenblatt argues that "Licit sexuality in *Twelfth Night* – the only craving that the play can represent as capable of finding satisfaction – depends upon a movement that deviates from the desired object straight in one's path towards a marginal object, a body one scarcely knows" (68). Greenblatt sees such a movement as part of the consolidation of sexual norms, but he undermines his own argument later in the essay when he says that "I would suggest that *Twelfth Night* may not finally bring home to us the fundamental distinction between men and women; not only may the distinction be blurred, but *the home to which it is supposed to be brought may seem less securely ours, less cozy and familiar, than we have come to expect*" (72, my emphasis). I would argue that swerving away from the conventional research path similarly effects a defamiliarisation of the research object itself.

about it without endangering her friendships. She subsequently wrote an excellent piece of theatre criticism based on an inability to directly speak her mind. I think this carries a valuable lesson for those involved in performance research. Sometimes, the more creative response is not to follow the most direct or the most well trodden path, but to swerve and see where a new path might take you.
