

Chapter 4: “Putting on the Destined Livery”: Actresses play Isabella in *Measure for Measure*

L'inégalité, sociale, politique ou (...) accidentelle et psychologique,
fait partie des conditions d'énonciation.

(Anne Ubersfeld, *Lire le Théâtre
III - Le Dialogue de Théâtre*, 1996)

Introduction

The previous chapter has emphasised more difficulties than opportunities for actresses when faced with the weight of demonisation in Shakespearean tragedy. This chapter looks at something of a success story for actresses and for feminist criticism in challenging perceptions of a woman's role, specifically that of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. Before the 1970's, literary criticism of the play traditionally considered her a difficult and unpopular character within the Shakespearean canon. Jacqueline Rose, in her essay “Sexuality in the Reading of Shakespeare: *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*” (1985), notes that earlier critics referred to Isabella as a “hussy” (Charlton), as “hysterical” (Lever), or as suffering “inhibitions” (Knight), in a way that suggested Isabella herself constituted the ‘problem’ of the play.¹ Similarly, Isabella's refusal to value her brother's life over her chastity had also made her unpopular with male directors who tended to make her unsympathetic and/or repressed in performance.

However, this devaluation of Isabella by critics and directors was often inversely proportional to the interest shown in the part by the actresses who played her and for whom the role represented a welcome challenge. From the end of the 1970's onwards, this challenge became explicitly informed by the second wave English women's movement and its re-examination of questions such as female autonomy. This

¹ Jacqueline Rose, “Sexuality in the Reading of Shakespeare: *Hamlet* and *Measure for Measure*” in John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares*, (London & New York: 1996. First published Methuen & Co.1985.), p. 104.

movement had important ramifications in the theatre where actresses struggled to move away from male-defined representations of women. It was also vital to critical theory where feminist critics made clear that much of the 'problem' of Isabella was more often the problem of male critics working from (hetero)sexist premises. Gains from this period were far-reaching and helped the next generation of actresses and critics to approach the representation of Isabella from an altered standpoint.

In Portugal, too, actresses have considered the role of Isabella a challenge rather than a burden. Indeed, the theatrical odds built into playing the part have constituted much of its challenge, and actresses have sought to redefine the role in the light of contemporary concerns. This chapter argues that in the Portuguese context this has also resulted in gains for actresses and that redefinitional work undertaken in England has had a significant effect on subsequent work in Portugal.

The first section of the chapter begins with a discussion of the role of gender in the processes of cultural transfer of Shakespearean texts. The next section speculates as to why *Measure for Measure* became a popular choice for performance in the late 1970's and early 1980's in England and Portugal. It examines the pioneering critical work of Carol Rutter on the performances of Paola Dionisotti and Juliet Stevenson in the role. This is complemented by analysis of a 1977 performance of Isabella by Júlia Correia in order to compare the redefinitional work done in English and Portuguese contexts during this period. Section Three returns to the question of why *Measure for Measure* once more became a popular choice for performance in the altered circumstances of the 1990's. It analyses performances of the role by Stella Gonet in 1994 and by Carla Chambel in 1997 in order to examine the extent to which the redefinitional work done by the earlier generation of actresses and critics had reshaped performance on a more permanent basis. It also discusses the new, more direct

relationship between English and Portuguese theatrical practice enabled by the increase in theatrical exchanges. Throughout, the chapter highlights the ways in which notions of sexual transgression in Shakespeare are transformed through the processes of social and political change.

I. Gender and Cultural Transfer

Erika Fischer-Lichte argues that when a theatrical culture stages a play from another theatrical culture, it is invariably because performance of that play is seen in some way to fulfil the needs of the “own” rather than the “foreign” culture:

The starting point of intercultural performance is, therefore, not primarily interest in the foreign, the foreign theatre form or foreign culture from which it derives, but rather a wholly specific situation within the own culture, or wholly specific problem originating in the own theatre.⁷⁵

In their fascinating study, *Women’s Intercultural Performance*, Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins cast the predominance of the “own” culture positively. They point out that such processes of cultural transfer can be beneficial for women because they open up new “identity spaces” for them in the adapting culture:

It is our contention that the translation and adaptation of texts across cultures can increase the repertoire of identity spaces available to audiences, and can *assist in articulating the shifts in subjectivity triggered by social upheavals*. This process is particularly significant when the identity spaces contained within the performed texts are capable of expressing a lived reality *insufficiently symbolised within the existing framework of the host culture* (my emphasis).²

⁷⁵ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign* (Tubingen: Gunter Narr, 1990), p.283.

² Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins, *Women’s Intercultural Performance*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.54.

Holledge and Tompkins' argument is an important one, but also prompts further questions. For instance, how might such identity spaces be opened up for performers as well as audiences within the "own" theatrical culture? How might such gains transfer back to the "foreign" culture from which they have originated to open up new identity spaces for the "foreign" culture in their turn? Are there, equally, factors which *prevent* such cultural transfers from taking place?

Shakespeare has been particularly prone to the intercultural adaptation described by Fischer-Lichte and Holledge and Tompkins. Nevertheless, little critical attention has been paid to the ways in which the women characters in Shakespearean drama are received and transformed in different cultural contexts. As theatrical products increasingly cross national borders, it is vital to consolidate a wider critical perspective on questions of gender in the performance of Shakespearean drama. Looking at the ways in which English redefinitional work has influenced Portuguese representations of Isabella is one side of the equation, but enabling the work done in contexts such as the Portuguese to talk back to the English work which has influenced it is an equally important part of this process.

II. Why *Measure for Measure*? (1) 1975-1985

Performances of *Measure for Measure* tend to be grouped together in small clusters rather than distributed regularly over time in both England and Portugal. Indeed, before Peter Brook's production in the 1950's, *Measure for Measure* was not a play that was performed regularly at all. What was found uncomfortable in the play is probably what has made it sporadically popular since then; its moral complexity, its focus on abuse as

the inevitable corollary of power and a particularly strong focus on sexuality. This begins to suggest why it might have been chosen for performance in the late 1970's and early 1980's. In Portugal, the 1974 Revolution represented a complete break with the politics of the past. A play like *Measure for Measure* would have had a difficult life under the political censors and it is noticeable that the play had only been performed once on the Portuguese stage before the Revolution, by the Teatro Moderno de Lisboa in 1964.³ There were only two published translations of the play in existence before 1974 – a 1955 translation by Henrique Braga and a 1964 translation by Luiz Francisco Rebello.⁴ In the post-revolutionary context, however, it became an obvious choice for a theatrical culture which was now free from censorship on political and sexual questions. In England, the growth of radical politics during this period also challenged traditional parliamentary forms of political organising and conventional ways of making theatre. Feminism was central to these political and theatrical transformations and feminist criticism of Shakespeare sought both to reflect and to contribute to these changes.

II. I. “A Massive Journey”: Carol Rutter on Paola Dionisotti (1978) and Juliet Stevenson (1983) Performing Isabella

Carol Rutter's chapter on Isabella in *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today* (1988) was particularly influential in countering the critical and theatrical myth of Isabella's unpopularity. The comments of actresses Paola Dionisotti and Juliet Stevenson provided a fascinating glimpse of a character in the process of a redefinition

³ *Dente por Dente* (Tooth for a Tooth) was part of the IVth Shakespeare centenary and was supported financially by the Calouste Gulbenkian foundation. The director was António Pedro. Fernando Gusmão played Angelo and Carmen Dolores played Isabella. It used Rebello's translation and was performed in the Cinema Império in Lisbon.

⁴ Henrique Braga, *Medida por Medida – tragicomédia em 5 actos*, (Porto: Lello & Irmão, 1955), and Luiz Francisco Rebello, *Dente por Dente (Measure for Measure) de William Shakespeare, tragicomédia em 2 partes*, (Lisboa: Prelo, 1964). According to Mário Barradas, Rebello significantly “sweetened” his translation so that it would get past the censor. I have not found any direct evidence of this, but the translation does include a series of songs which may have represented a way of maintaining some of the difficulties of the text in a context that might have been seen as less threatening by the censors.

powered by the second wave women's movement. It also helped to show how feminist criticism and theatrical practice could work together in a symbiotic relationship which benefited both. The actresses provided Rutter with important evidence that actresses were concerned with many of the questions that were being raised by feminist criticism. Moreover, without this critical work by Rutter, it is probable that much of the redefinitional work undertaken by this generation of actresses would have been lost to later generations. Similarly, the comments of the actresses were articulate pieces of Shakespearean criticism in themselves and Rutter's astute questioning and editing showcased just how much of an intellectual exercise preparing for a role could be.

Juliet Stevenson's Isabella in Adrian Noble's 1983 production of *Measure for Measure* has come to be seen as one of the most influential recent interpretations of the role. Yet Stevenson herself is the first to acknowledge her debt to Paola Dionisotti's earlier performance of Isabella in 1978, in a production where Stevenson herself played one of the prostitutes. Dionisotti notes ironically how the director Barry Kyle chose her for the role based on a negative view of Isabella. Dionisotti's thin, bony face and small mouth were designed to reinforce the director's view of Isabella as "uptight and repressed".⁵ However, Dionisotti drew on her own intercultural background in order to rethink this stage representation:

My memory of nuns was of quite ordinary women. They were very giggly. When there was pleasure or delight, they almost invariably became like little kids – that was just one thing I held onto when thinking about someone who had wanted to go into a convent for a very long time, but who had not been able to. (29)

⁵ Carol Rutter, *Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today*, (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 29. Page numbers for subsequent quotations from Rutter's chapter are indicated in parentheses.

Stevenson was also keen to rethink “the *positive* reasons for entering a convent (...). Leaving the world may not be fleeing the world, it may be a way of avoiding becoming its slave” (author’s emphasis, 40).

Both Stevenson and Dionisotti anchored their performances on interpretations of the Shakespearean text. Dionisotti spoke of the evocative power of Isabella’s language in phrases like “perilous mouths” (II, IV, 173) where it seemed to her that “it’s as though Isabella’s seeing words emanating in physical form, she’s somebody obsessed with the human mouth out of which these kinds of words can come” (36).⁶ In her close reading of Isabella’s scenes with Angelo, Stevenson worked to bring out the erotic dynamics of the encounters. She noted that this is an eroticism that both characters create through language, and that “(t)hey keep landing right in the middle of each other’s line, in the middle of each other’s thought” (48). She added that Isabella takes words that Angelo uses, such as “treasures” (II, IV, 96) and expands on their meaning, opening them up to a wider understanding which encompasses both the physical and the spiritual. Stevenson and Dionisotti also thought through the implications of the line “More than our brother is our chastity” (II, IV, 186), which had often been singled out by critics and directors as indicative of Isabella’s coldness and lack of humanity. Dionisotti argued that this was not a matter of debate for Isabella, but simply a statement of fact. For Stevenson, the speech was not so much about chastity, but about anarchy. If Isabella were to accept Angelo’s proposal, no woman in Vienna would be safe. As Stevenson argued, “(i)t is more than a personal decision, it has political resonances too”, and this is signalled in the double usage of the pronoun “our” rather than “my” in this line. What is interesting here is the way in which both actresses used the authority of the Shakespearean text in order to create space for their own redefined performances of

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Brian Gibbons (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. First published 1991). All subsequent references are to this edition.

Isabella. They used their interpretations of ‘what’s in the text’ to ward off potential disagreements, particularly with male directors, about the ways in which they wanted to perform Isabella. Skilfully, in other words, they were using the canonicity of the dead white male dramatist as a bulwark against the pretensions of living white male directors with their own investments in canonicity.

However, whilst Stevenson found Adrian Noble more receptive to her work, which enabled her to give an interpretation of Isabella as “warm, vivacious, even sensuous” (40), Dionisotti found herself alienated from her production. She felt she was not able to find Isabella’s “strength and energy” and that her Isabella ended the production “deeply weary”. Partly, this had to do with casting choices, for Kyle chose a much younger actor to play Claudio who tended to gain audience sympathy and thus make it difficult for Dionisotti to gain understanding for Isabella’s predicament. It also had to do with changes to the script, which included a break between Isabella’s prison meeting with Claudio and her subsequent conversation with the Duke. Dionisotti rightly pointed out that this made Isabella’s willingness to contemplate Mariana taking her place in the bed trick cynical rather than a response born out of her despair. Furthermore, Dionisotti noted that the naturalistic approach of the production did not help her performance. She found the many improvisations “deeply inhibiting” and the basis of “a load of rather arbitrary decisions”, which went against her own desire to start with the text and ask questions from there (31). Her comment suggests that establishing parallels between real-life women and Shakespearean characters like Isabella was not particularly helpful, and that the text itself offered greater dramatic possibilities for actresses playing the role based on how *different* these characters were from women in the contemporary world.

Costume choice had long proved to be a privileged site for contests over the

meaning of Isabella even before Dionisotti and Stevenson took on the role. Many years previously, for instance, Judi Dench had played Isabella in a Nottingham Playhouse production set in 1930's Vienna. Director John Neville made Mariana's moated grange into a seedy night club, where Mariana sat smoking and drinking heavily. Yet this setting caused some problems for Dench's own entrance in the scene, as she recalled:

The atmosphere was terrific. But then, as Isabella, I had to come bursting in through the door after-hours at this night club in a white nun's costume. I asked John Neville how on earth I was to do this. He replied that I was to come on like any nun would come on after-hours in a night club.⁷

On the basis of such experiences, Juliet Stevenson argued that it was impossible to play the role of Isabella in a nun's costume, as audiences invariably concentrate only on the image of the nun and not on the predicaments of the character. Contrasting the constrictions inherent in such a costume with the freedom offered by the text's language, she stated that:

Isabella goes on a massive journey. At certain points, thoughts of the nunnery are a million miles away. She shapes, and continually reshapes, where she's going *through her language*. It's revelatory, not imposed. The visual image can't tell her story, because it's too restrictive. She moves, it doesn't. The costume simply can't keep up with the language" (42, author's emphasis).

For her own performance, therefore, Stevenson was dressed in a "rich but sombre" black gown. She was also keen to play the role in a non-twentieth century setting, for she believed it to be impossible to play Isabella's dilemma within a contemporary context which values life above all else. As she argued "(i)f her decision is not one the audience can identify with positively, they will judge her" (41). Dionisotti did wear a

⁷ Judi Dench in Roger Sales (ed.), *Shakespeare in Perspective*, vol. 1, (Chatham: Ariel Books, 1982) p. 86.

nun's costume for her performances, but it was transformed as the production progressed, becoming dirtier and less recognisable. After being told Claudio was dead, she pulled off her wimple, a gesture she found "shocking and liberating" as "(f)rom then on I began to be much more open. Rolling up the sleeves – I was launching into *doing* things in a big way" (32). At the end of the play, the Duke discarded his robes of justice and Dionisotti left her veil on the floor, in recognition that it was impossible not to become involved in the messy sordidness of worldly existence. It was also something of a 'seventies moment' in its equation of the removal of restrictive clothing with personal liberation.

Stevenson's ending played Isabella as somewhat resigned to the continuing inability of men in authority to change. She saw no justification for the happy ending the director wanted as the Duke's treatment of Lucio suggests he has learnt nothing of what Isabella has tried to teach him about mercy. As Stevenson pointed out, "(t)he status quo has been restored. Men are organizing things. So what should Isabella say or do? I used to take a long, long pause, in which I looked at everyone – drawing in the collective experience in a way. Then I took the Duke's hand" (52). Significantly, her comments in Rutter's chapter ended with a reaffirmation of the importance of Dionisotti's earlier performance for her own, which seemed to bring the discussion full circle.

II. II. Staging the Revolution: Júlia Correia's Isabella in *Medida por Medida* (1977)

The 1974 Portuguese Revolution laid the basis for a modern, democratic theatre sector by freeing it from political censorship and establishing the principle that theatre work should be publicly funded. The immediate post-revolutionary period saw a great

increase in the number and type of plays performed, as well as wider audiences for those plays and a greater variety of venues for their performance. It also took the first steps towards creating a network of regional theatre companies. The first of these was the Centro Cultural de Évora which was established in 1975. Two years later, in 1977, the actress Júlia Correia played Isabella in the CCE/Teatro Animação de Setúbal co-production of *Medida por Medida*, which was directed and translated by the main figure behind the CCE, Mário Barradas. She stated in interview that their decision to perform *Medida por Medida* at this time owed much to its focus on ‘questions of corruption’, ‘political manoeuvring’ and people ‘holding onto power at all costs’. These were issues which had been very much brought into focus by the revolutionary movement.⁸ Yet if the themes of *Medida por Medida* spoke forcefully to audiences for whom questions of power and corruption constituted lived realities, for a group which was just starting out, undoubtedly the choice of Shakespeare was intended also to help establish its own theatrical reputation.⁹

Women played important individual roles in the revolution, although the women’s movement that appeared in its aftermath remained small and fragmented.¹⁰ Yet the production’s concern with questions of power did not appear to include a specific focus on the ways power is exercised sexually. For Correia, the main conflict highlighted in the production was that between Angelo and the Duke, and this was reflected in a production where ‘power is disputed among men’, with Isabella merely a

⁸ Personal interview with Júlia Correia, (26/4/2002). All subsequent quotations from this interview are indicated in single quotation marks.

⁹ According to Carlos Alberto Machado’s photobiography of the group, 5, 845 spectators saw the 23 performances of the play. C.f. *Centro Dramático de Évora: 25 Anos em Cena (CCE/CENDREV) 1975-2000*, (Évora: CENDREV, 2000), p. 38.

¹⁰ The MDM (Movimento Democrático de Mulheres) had been formed in 1968 and was active throughout this period, particularly in opposing colonial war, and supporting trade union and peace initiatives. The MLM (Movimento de Libertação das Mulheres) was formed in the wake of the Revolution and campaigned not only for equal rights at work, but also measures such as the right to contraception and a decriminalising of abortion. The movement becomes much more fragmented in the 1980’s as the women’s organisations formed tend to be located within professional and political organisations rather than on a national level as separate women’s organisations. See Manuela Tavares, “Associações de Mulheres nas Décadas de ‘70 e ‘80” in *História* (34) Março 2001, pp.30-39.

‘precious jewel’ in their exchanges. This is perhaps not surprising considering that there was little history of the representation of sexual politics on the Portuguese stage as a result of such a long period of censorship. Questions of power and corruption were not at the time seen to be explicitly inflected by those of sexual politics. Yet, this reluctance to foreground Isabella might also be explained in terms of contradictory feelings about religion as an oppositional site in the post-revolutionary context. Isabella uses religious arguments in a progressive fashion to challenge the abuse of power by the state. However, in a cultural context where organised religion had been a crucial prop of the Fascist regime, a radical sense that Isabella needed to be saved from her religion might also persist. This could explain a certain unwillingness to emphasise further the role of Isabella in the play.

It may also help to explain the fact that while the English actresses interviewed by Rutter had been keen to use Isabella’s religious beliefs to emphasise her integrity, Correia placed Isabella’s religious beliefs at the heart of questions of power in a way that questioned her motives.¹¹ In interview, she kept returning to an idea of Isabella as ‘unscrupulous’. At first she was unsure why she felt this, but then suggested it was because Isabella abandons so many of her principles in the course of the play. From this perspective, Isabella’s entry into the convent does not represent an escape, either from the world or her sexuality, but a sharp career move into alternative corridors of power for women. As Correia noted, many women who joined convents were well-off and determined to progress within the convent hierarchy. Correia joked that nothing less than the position of Mother Superior would have sufficed for someone like Isabella. As Isabella is forced into worldly affairs, Correia felt she simply discovers she has more chances of exercising power in the outside world than in the convent. At the beginning of the play, ‘she has no place in public life,’ but by the end, she has a role that is

¹¹ Note, for example, that the title of Rutter’s chapter on Isabella is “Isabella: Virtue Betrayed?”

‘dignified and powerful’. In what Correia labelled her ‘social canonisation’ at the end of the play, she takes on a powerful role as the younger Duchess of an older Duke. Correia summed up her progress through the play as ‘experimentou, gostou e ficou’ (she tried it, she liked it, and decided to stay), and she indicated that it was precisely the way in which Isabella ‘channels her need for power’ that she enjoyed in the role.

Correia also highlighted a strong subliminal connection between religion and sexuality in her performance. She commented that her preparation for the role included reading works by St. Teresa of Avila in order to illuminate Isabella’s ‘mystical fervour’ and spoke of Isabella’s ‘sublimation of desire in religion’. Yet she also noted an unconscious sexual charge in Isabella’s first meeting with Angelo which she connected with Isabella’s ‘pleasure in risking and maybe winning all’.¹² She also referred to a ‘game of seduction’ between Isabella and the Duke, where the Duke worked to bring Isabella round to his way of thinking by awakening her emotional responses.

The production was structured as a ‘play within a play’. A set of nobles crossed the stage at the beginning in order to sit and watch *Medida por Medida* itself. This was, for Correia, a way to bring the production closer to the audience and to establish a more direct connection between the time period of the play and the contemporary period of the production. A similar desire to make the contemporary importance of the play clear to the audience, but also emphasise its historical distance, led to production costumes which were described by Correia as ‘iconoclastic’ in their combination of period and modern dress. Happily, costume choice worked unexpectedly to Correia’s advantage. After visiting Claudio, the actor playing the Duke used much physical touching to reassure the distressed Isabella that his proposed bed-trick was morally acceptable.

¹² Correia remarked that Isabella’s enjoyment of risk seemed to her to be completely lacking in Claudio. It is interesting that Correia thought of Isabella as Claudio’s younger sister, which explains the importance to her of convincing him to accept her decision. Productions invariably play Claudio as younger than Isabella, though this is usually just to gain sympathy for his predicament, rather than based on any actual evidence in the text.

However, his acrylic costume gave off tiny static shocks during the performance, so that Correia instinctively recoiled when he approached. This created an interesting tension for the audience between Isabella's seeming verbal acquiescence at this point and her noticeably physical aversion to the Duke.

At the end of the production, however, Correia acknowledged that her Isabella 'flickered out'. She felt there was no indication that Isabella does not accept the Duke's proposal as she has no speech rejecting it and 'normally she has no difficulties in responding'. Her Isabella, therefore, kneeled and accepted the Duke's proposal.

In theatrical terms, Correia's performance embodied something of the contradictions of the revolutionary movement for women. Many women were involved in the explosion of theatrical performances of many different kinds after the revolution. Eugénia Vasques also points out that the period witnessed the growing professionalisation of actresses in the new courses that sprung up in the wake of the Revolution.¹³ Within the theatre, questions of power continued to be defined in male terms and stage representations of women did not yet reflect the changing realities for women ushered in by the Revolution. As Correia's interpretation made clear, however, the sphere of religion is charged with its own power and Isabella is quick to make use of it as a woman. Moreover, the production also illustrated that it was possible for a woman to enter the public sphere of men and be successful in it, or even to manipulate it to her advantage. Effectively, what Dionisotti and Stevenson were experimenting with in the same period under the influence of the women's movement, Correia was

¹³ According to Eugénia Vasques, actresses were "an important sociological phenomenon in a time of street festivals, an explosion of courses and a newly-enlarged role for the theatre". C.f. *Mulheres que Escreveram Teatro no Século XX em Portugal*, (Lisboa: Colibri, 2001), p.37.

exploring within the new spaces opened up by the Revolution.¹⁴ Nevertheless, there is little sense of intercultural ‘borrowing’ in this period and few theatrical productions travelled directly between the two cultures. Mario Barradas had studied with Brechtian Giorgio Strehler, and this influence can be seen in the production’s attempts to historicise the play, but also highlight its contemporary social relevance. Nevertheless, the flow of theatrical information seems to have been still very much on an individual level rather than on a more organised footing. Processes of redefinition tended to remain culturally specific. This was enhanced by the fact that there was no critic such as Rutter to detail performances like Correia’s which, to all intents and purposes, vanished with the end of the production run.

III. Why *Measure for Measure*? (2) 1994-2004

Almost twenty years later, *Measure for Measure* once more became a popular play for performance. As Kate Chedgzoy points out, “1994 was the year of *Measure for Measure*” in Britain.¹⁵ Both the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and Cheek by Jowl had productions of the play in this year and David Thacker’s television production was also shown by the BBC. Chedgzoy points out that these productions coincided with a ‘back-to-basics’ campaign by the Conservative government which emphasised the importance of sexual morality for a stable social order. This made the play’s concern with sexuality particularly relevant. Yet its focus on the corruption which accompanies power was also singled out by Cheek by Jowl’s Declan Donnellan. He commented that

¹⁴ Although I am introducing this distinction here, the work of the English actresses also had a political dimension and the work by Correia had a feminist focus. For example, Juliet Stevenson saw Isabella’s line “More than our brother is our chastity” as embodying her refusal to give in to what effectively constitutes social anarchy and Correia viewed Isabella as ‘a woman out of her time’, unable to use her talents in areas that were socially proscribed for women. Indeed, in Correia’s later solo work, a feminist focus became more prominent.

¹⁵ Kate Chedgzoy, *William Shakespeare: Measure for Measure*, (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2000), p.1

their performance of the play had been successful in various national contexts because “where you have government you tend also to have some kind of abuse of it”.¹⁶

In Portugal, there were two productions of *Measure for Measure* just in 1997. Teatro Comuna first produced the play and then the Nottingham Playhouse brought its production over to Portugal as part of the Po.NTI Festival in Porto. In 2002, the amateur English language theatre group, the Lisbon Players, also performed the play. The same period also saw new translations of *Measure for Measure*. Comuna commissioned one for their production from Maria João da Rocha Afonso and then M. Gomes da Torre, co-ordinator of the ‘Shakespeare Para O Século XXI’ series, produced his own translation of the play in 2001.¹⁷

Although this spate of 1990’s productions shared an interest in power and the regulation of sexuality with productions of the play in the earlier period, there are important differences. The earlier period can be characterised as a period of radical optimism, where major changes were taking place very rapidly in both England and Portugal. However, by the 1990’s, there was growing disillusionment with attempts to effect social change. People were growing up in England without having had any other experience of government than that of the Conservatives. In Portugal, the coming to power of a Socialist Government in 1995 raised many expectations, but by 1997 these were beginning to fade. One of the consequences of this disillusionment with the political was a greater focus on what might be labelled the ‘human’ aspects of the characters in the play.¹⁸ In the case of Isabella, this was evident in a renewed psychological interest in exploring the motivations that lay behind Isabella’s actions. Also characteristic of these later productions is the fact that more information was

¹⁶ *Ibid* p.2.

¹⁷ M. Gomes da Torre, *Medida por Medida*, (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2001).

¹⁸ I do not wish, however, to counterpoise the “political” and the “human” in a simplistic way. Indeed, the construction of the “human” in these later productions was influenced by the earlier extension of the “political” into what were previously considered ‘personal’ areas.

available on theatrical work done in different cultural contexts, although, as will be seen, there continued to be many constraints on how this information circulated.

III. I. “Every Inch the Feminist Heroine”: Stella Gonet’s Isabella in the RSC *Measure for Measure* (1994)

Stella Gonet played Isabella in a 1994 Royal Shakespeare Company production which *The Stratford upon Avon Herald* characterised as “notable for images of feminine power”.¹⁹ Isabella, for instance, appeared in a suit and Doc. Martens in the final act, Mariana was an abstract artist in her retreat at the moated grange and the presence of Mistress Overdone was supplemented by three prostitutes on stage. This section looks at specific moments of the production as well as the press reviews it attracted. It aims to establish the extent to which the redefinitional work of the previous generation of actresses had had a lasting effect on later theatre work, as well as to what extent those who write about theatre were talking about the role in different terms by 1994.²⁰

Reviewers certainly discussed Gonet’s performance in detail. Two reasons can be suggested for this. Firstly, Gonet was well-known from her appearances on television in a series called *The House of Elliott*. Secondly, more critical attention might also have been focused upon her performance because reviewers so disliked the performance of Michael Feast as a cynical, manipulative Duke. It is true, nevertheless, that there has been a wider shift from considering the Duke-Angelo partnership as the critical one in the play, to focusing upon the Angelo-Isabella relationship as a measure of the play’s success. This would explain the reviewers’ greater focus on the performance of Isabella.

¹⁹ Review by Paul Lapworth, “The Playmaker Duke” in *The Stratford upon Avon Herald*, (27/10/1994). Subsequent quotations from this newspaper are taken from this review.

²⁰ I concentrate here on newspaper reviews, but the production has also been discussed by theatre academics such as Kate Chedgzoy in her introduction to the play. I also discuss the representation of the prostitutes in this production in Chapter 6.

As for the performance itself, critics were divided. For *The Daily Telegraph* critic, Stella Gonet suggested “the baffling mixture of human warmth and priggish spiritual pride in Isabella’s personality”.²¹ After praising the performance of Alex Jennings as Angelo, Benedict Nightingale in *The Times* claimed he was “well-partnered by Stella Gonet, a warm, glowing Isabella who finds herself flaring almost as uncontrollably as Jennings, only with pain and rage”.²² *The Citizen*, however, considered Stella Gonet “not quite right for Isabella. She is too self-assured and not half passionate enough”.²³ Similarly, Michael Billington wrote that Gonet’s “mature and sensual Isabella, for all her passion, never struck me as a plausible candidate for the Saint Clare sisterhood”.²⁴ Helene Barratt saw Gonet’s Isabella as “highly strung, nervy and clearly heading for the cloisters as a way of escaping all that nasty sex business”,²⁵ while *The Mail on Sunday* went so far as to say that Gonet was miscast because “throughout the play you cannot help but wonder why a woman of such mature and intelligent voluptuousness is so shocked at the idea of having sex to save her brother’s life”.²⁶ These reviews are characterised by a considerable degree of contradiction and confusion. They point to a performance that was both rational and emotional, although these elements of the performance are often constructed as antithetical. There are still vestiges of an older view of Isabella as priggish and unable to deal with her sexuality, but there are just as many references to her warmth, her sensuality, her maturity and self-assurance. Moreover, they do not indicate that there is anything particularly novel in bringing out these aspects of Isabella in performance, which suggests both that this

²¹ Review by Charles Spencer, “Trip Down Lust’s Sour Byways” in *The Daily Telegraph*, (22/10/1994).

²² Review by Benedict Nightingale, “Shakespeare’s Study in Sleaze” in *The Times*, (22/10/1994).

²³ Unattributed review entitled “RSC Get The Measure Of A Classic” in *The Citizen*, (24/10/1994).

²⁴ Review by Michael Billington “Made-to-Measure Confusion in *The Guardian* (22/10/1994).

Subsequent quotations from this newspaper are taken from this review.

²⁵ Listings review by Helene Barratt in *The Yorkshire Post*, (22/10/1994).

²⁶ Unattributed review in *The Mail on Sunday*, (30/10/1994).

has become more common in performance as well as grudgingly accepted by theatrical reviewers.

Much of the critical attention was concentrated on the final act in the play. This involved bringing 50-60 male citizens of Stratford on stage to act as judges, academics and other ‘model citizens’. When Isabella, dressed in a black man’s suit and Doc. Martens, first made her accusation against Angelo, these assembled citizens shouted ‘Shame’. When she talked about losing her virginity they sniggered. As Michael Billington pointed out, such attitudes made clear “the sexual chauvinism of public life”. At the end of the play, when the Duke made his proposal to Isabella, Gonet first slapped him across the face, then kissed him, then turned away from him. The lights then went down on both of them (see photograph no. 5 at the end of this chapter). *The Sunday Telegraph* critic dismissed this as “editorialising rather than directing”,²⁷ and Karen Hambridge in *The Evening News* found the “understated ending” (...) “a bit confusing to say the least”. However, a majority of reviewers approved of this finale. Michael Billington claimed it ended on a “fascinatingly unresolved note”, while Richard Edmonds in *The Birmingham Post* gave “the highest praise” to Stella Gonet “for ending the evening on an unresolved note, which is correct”.²⁸ *The Stratford upon Avon Herald* was especially positive about the ending, writing that “Stella Gonet makes this astonishing climax a credible delight by playing Isabella as a young woman of mature intellectual choice, already baptised and confirmed in her own opinions instead of the vulnerably intense teenager sometimes portrayed”.

The Bicester Advertiser found Isabella in this courtroom scene “every inch the feminist heroine”.²⁹ Certainly, Stella Gonet’s Isabella was mature, sensible and intelligent not only in this scene but throughout the play. Her encounters with Angelo

²⁷ John Gross, “Too Much Mercy, Not Enough Justice” in *The Sunday Telegraph*, (23/10/1994).

²⁸ Review by Richard Edmonds “Measure of the Duke” in *The Birmingham Post*, (22/10/1994).

²⁹ Peter Barrington in *The Bicester Advertiser*, (4/11/1994).

particularly, revealed a woman who was intelligent and articulate and the lovely, lilting quality of the actress's voice made her speeches pleasant to listen to. Her negotiation of the ending was both convincing and dramatic. However, despite the obvious care taken to construct an Isabella who knew what she believed in and was able to argue for it convincingly, Gonet's performance was interspersed with gasps and screams at several key moments in the production.³⁰ In her second encounter with Angelo, for example, she seemed so shocked when he finally made clear what he was proposing, she could only shriek. This seemed strange from a character who had so recently made a mature and convincing plea for her brother's life. Also, after she and Mariana knelt to plead for Angelo's life and the Duke told them he would not pardon Angelo, both Mariana and Isabella screamed as they clung to each other on the floor. I appreciate that the intention in both instances was to make Isabella less one-dimensional and show that even if she can plead utterly rationally, there are moments of great emotion where language breaks down. Yet, this indicates the difficulty of bringing the play up-to-date, for such reactions are not convincing from a character who, in other respects, is very much a modern 1990's woman. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that *male* performers in major roles at the RSC would be asked to shriek or gasp at moments of intense emotion. There are a wide range of theatrical means of conveying shock and surprise which do not involve falling back on the stereotype that women who are successful in public life must inevitably be emotionally flawed. Kinetics and proxemics, for example, are very effective in indicating changed relationships onstage. Gonet gave a very powerful performance which moved Isabella resolutely out of the niche of victim. It was,

³⁰ I am not suggesting here that gasps and screams do not have a place in theatre work. They can be moving, chilling or intensely painful. Hélia Correia mentions a poem by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, for instance, about a performance by the Greek actress Aspasia Papathanassiou as Atrida where her "terrifying" scream shook the audience. C.f. Hélia Correia, "Tocada Pelas Palavras" in *O Público (Mil Folhas)*, (10/7/2004), p. 17. My quarrel is with using gasps and screams in a decontextualised way to foreclose just such intensity. It is also with the way in which they were used specifically to undermine the actresses' representations of strong, independent women. My thanks to my supervisor, Professor Filomena Louro, for raising this point with me.

therefore, a shame that these gasps and shrieks distracted from the performance by trying to introduce a rather trite psychological sub-text into her performance.

Having said this, within the space of fifteen to twenty years it is remarkable just how far conceptions of performing Isabella have changed in English theatre practice. In performance, her warmth and her intelligence have become as much part of the conventions upon which an actress can draw as her status as a novice and nun's costume. The notion of an ambiguity in the character seems to have been internalised and even embraced, whereas only twenty years before it was assumed that to play Isabella was to have to deal with a role that could only be unattractive for audiences. Furthermore, the fact that Isabella's oppression as a woman was linked with that of Mariana, Juliet and even Mistress Overdone helped to recreate the context of the final act and show how it is the women as much as Angelo who are on trial here.

Critical reviewing of the role has also moved forward, but less so, perhaps because a certain salaciousness in relation to performances by women, especially as novices, continues to help sell newspapers.³¹ This was particularly true in reports by smaller, local newspapers and those more towards the tabloid end of the market. Yet in relation to the ending, for example, both reviewers and theatre practitioners seem to have accepted its ambiguity. This may, however, have been because it evoked a sense that women, even "feminist heroines" still do not really know what they want. It may also have been because they felt Michael Feast deserved to be slapped on the face for making public the knowledge that the Duke is, in fact, a highly unattractive, manipulative character.

³¹ The very titles of the reviews are indicative of this, as are the comments on the prostitutes, which are discussed in Chapter Six. It is also interesting how "the feminist heroine" has replaced the novice as a sexualised female figure for whom sex with men is unthinkable and, therefore, subject to male fantasy.

III. II. “Something Rotten in Both Kingdoms”: The 1997 Comuna production of *Measure for Measure*

As the name suggests, Teatro Comuna are one of the theatre companies most closely associated with the 1974 Revolution, and one of the main independent companies to come to prominence after the Revolution.³² Their 1997 production of *Measure for Measure* was the group’s first performance of a Shakespeare play and was chosen to celebrate the company’s twenty-five years of existence. As such, it was part of a series of events which also included concerts, an exhibition and a photobiography of the group. Theatrically, the production represented something of ‘return to basics’ in the changed circumstances of the present which would focus the company’s work for the future. This desire to re-examine the past in the light of the present is particularly evident in two areas of the production. The first concerns shifting notions of the ‘political’ in performance. The second is the transformation of acting styles within the company highlighted by the production.

The politics of the period and of the company help to explain the choice of *Measure for Measure* for performance. The Socialist Government that came to power in 1995 had promised to create a national framework for the awarding of theatre subsidies that would recognise the crucial role played by the independent theatre sector since the Revolution. There would also be a central body to oversee the awarding of these subsidies. In the area of sexual politics, the Socialists had also promised to liberalise the law on abortion which still made it a criminal offence. By 1997, the government had effectively instituted a national system of subsidies and established a national body to run the theatre sector. However, the subsidies still represented a relatively small amount of money for theatre and criteria for the awarding of subsidies were often criticised as

³² Teatro Comuna were born in 1972 from a break with a previous group, the Bonecreiros. See Chapter Six for a fuller discussion of their history.

arbitrary and subject to favouritism. In the case of abortion reform, an attempt to introduce abortion on demand up to 10 weeks was rejected by Parliament at the beginning of 1997, and delayed for discussion until the following year.³³ As such, this period ushers in a growing disillusionment with the political project of the Socialist government.

The director of the Comuna production, João Mota, drew political parallels between the society depicted in *Measure for Measure* and that of 1990's Lisbon. In an interview with the newspaper *O Público*, he likened seventeenth-century Vienna to 1997 Lisbon "as there is something rotten in both kingdoms".³⁴ In a press release, he elaborated on this parallel, claiming that the periods shared a common context of "religious obsession, sickness, promiscuity, corruption and hypocrisy", best exemplified by the recently defeated proposal to decriminalise abortion.³⁵ The sordid reality of life in the 1990's was then contrasted with the valuable lessons to be learnt from the theatrical experience:

We live in a time where mediocrity reigns. It is a time where superficiality lies at the heart of the family unit and where people are chosen not according to their qualities but according to who they know. Theatre, on the other hand, teaches us to take our time: acting helps us learn how to dialogue with others; how to listen, look and have doubts.³⁶

Thus, two divergent notions of the relationship between theatre and social reality can be identified in the thinking behind the production. In one, the world of the play is 'like'

³³ When it was proposed again in 1998, this anti-punitive law was passed, but then defeated in a public referendum of the same year. It was decided that the law would have to be resubmitted to Parliament again at a later stage, but the issue remains unresolved.

³⁴ Article by Marina Ramos entitled "25 Anos de Comuna" in *O Público*, (3/4/1997), p.27.

³⁵ From Comuna Press Release April/May 1997, unpaginated. These ideas are also included in the production programme.

³⁶ "Vivemos um tempo onde reina a mediocridade, onde a superficialidade é a base da relação de família, onde as pessoas são escolhidas, não pela qualidade, mas sim pelo amiguismo. O Teatro, por outro lado, ensina-nos a ter tempo: contracenar é saber dialogar, saber ouvir, saber olhar, ter dúvidas". *Ibid.*

1990's Lisbon in a suggestively mimetic fashion. In the other, theatre exists as a utopian space which functions as the antithesis of the social reality of the 1990's. The two notions indicate a tension between using theatre to represent life 'as it is' and using the power of theatre as a basis for showing how life could be different. Indeed, in the latter scenario, the theatrical process is offered up as a kind of laboratory space where such alternatives can be experimented. This also represents a tension between two conceptions of staging the political within the company. This is a tension between a theatre that envisages the political as the reflection of the social real and a theatre that uses the different elements of the theatrical process itself as a political tool for transformation.

As indicated in the introductory chapter, despite the major setback for women represented by the defeat of proposals to decriminalise abortion, the 1990's were a period during which women increasingly made their presence felt in all areas of Portuguese theatre. It was not a presence that resulted from major ruptures in Portuguese theatrical life nor did it contribute towards them, but by 1997, it had begun to have a notable influence on theatrical practice. Comuna were well situated to reflect and contribute towards such changes, as they maintained close links with younger generations of theatre practitioners and encouraged the constant renovation of the group by incorporating younger practitioners into their theatre work. Yet within the company there remained obstacles to such changes, more often accidental than intentional, more often to do with the way things 'tended to be done' at Comuna than a deliberate attempt to block change. These obstacles prevented a fuller transformation of their theatrical practice in line with these new realities. The sites where tensions between these embryonic changes and Comuna's traditional practice were most evident in this

production were around Carla Chambel's performance as Isabella and in the dynamics surrounding Maria João da Rocha Afonso's translation.

III. II. (a) The Translation

The 1977 CCE/TAS production of *Medida por Medida* had used a translation by the director Mário Barradas, which was revised by his friend, Rui Knopfli.³⁷ For the Comuna production, an entirely new translation was commissioned from Maria João da Rocha Afonso.³⁸ On the one hand, the translation seemed to cast itself from the outset in a secondary position to the Shakespearean text, for it translated the play almost exclusively into prose and made very few cuts.³⁹ A stage version was prepared by Mota from the written translation which would seem to reduce the authority of the translation and the woman translator even further. As a result, the strategy adopted by Paula Dionisotti and Juliet Stevenson of using Shakespearean textual authority as the basis for their reworked performances might not have been available to Carla Chambel, for the translation would not have had the same status as the Shakespearean text. On the other hand, *Measure for Measure* is not a well-known play in Portugal. As this may well have been the first time many of the actors had encountered it and many in the audience had seen it, Rocha Afonso's translation effectively functioned *as the Shakespearean text* for them. Consequently, the authority of the translated text might not necessarily be

³⁷ Barradas has rejected Maria Helena Serôdio's claim that he based his translation on Rebello's earlier adaptation of the play, added scenes to the text and also used several French translations. Barradas himself says that he used a bilingual edition only as an aid to his own translation. C.f. Mario Barradas, "Aplauso com Reticências" in *O Público (Mil Folhas)*, 12/1/2002, p. 8

³⁸ Rocha Afonso had already worked with Comuna on their production of Marlowe's *Edward II*. She has said that Mota wanted the translated text of *Measure for Measure* to be as similar as possible to that used in the Peter Brook Bouffes du Nord production.

³⁹ In a personal interview (16/2/2004), Rocha Afonso said that she stipulates to all directors with whom she works that she will not translate into verse, preferring to produce a good prose version of the play than a not very good prose/verse version. She refers to translation as the 'management of gains and losses' of which this particular translation represents a good example, for the translation makes up in clarity and accessibility for what it loses in dramatic power and lyricism. All subsequent comments from Rocha Afonso are from this interview.

constituted as a problem. Chambel also suggested that a prose translation was preferred precisely so that actors did not become excessively concerned with how to speak the verse and so that the dramatic narrative of the play could be conveyed effectively.⁴⁰ Moreover, although a prose translation tends to reduce Isabella's eloquence in her encounters with Angelo, and this inevitably affects her dramatic power, it is also true that Angelo's speeches are equally affected by this. Indeed, the concentration of the Shakespearean text tends to be more on Angelo's dilemma than Isabella's. A prose translation thus renders their stage relationship potentially more equal. Nevertheless, there are instances where the tendency to clarify and simplify and the tendency to create dramatic poetry contradict each other. An early example is in Isabella's first scene with Angelo. Her arguments here are complex and not easily apprehended. Chambel herself talked of the difficulty for an actress in memorising the sequence and development of the arguments. In this sense, the importance of clear, accessible language is paramount. Yet it is also a scene where Isabella exhibits great rhetorical skill, and her language must give an idea of this. Rocha Afonso's prose translation conveys Isabella's first lines to Angelo as:

Há um vício que odeio e desejaria ver castigado pela Justiça.
Em seu favor, por minha vontade, nunca pediria, mas tenho
de o fazer; em seu favor não quero pedir, mas encontro-me
dividida entre o fazê-lo e não o fazer.⁴¹

The first line introduces some key words for Isabella, such as "vício", "odeio", "desejaria", "castigado" and "justiça". The next few lines give a sense of Isabella's

⁴⁰ Rocha Afonso also places a great stress on the importance of using accessible language that will be understood by the audience and that is 'speakable' onstage by the actor/actress.

⁴¹ Maria João da Rocha Afonso, *Medida por Medida*, unpublished translation, p. 37. The lines that are translated here come from Isabella's opening speech: "There is a vice that most I do abhor/And most desire should meet the blow of justice; / For which I would not plead, but that I must,/ For which I must not plead, but that I am/At war 'twixt will and will not." (Act II, Scene II, 30-34).

hesitation, but little of any dramatic conflict. It is as if she's explaining to Angelo, somewhat clumsily, a perfectly everyday state of affairs. What Rocha Afonso's translation gains in intelligibility, therefore, it loses in dramatic impact. On the other hand, Gomes da Torre's verse translation of the same lines runs:

Há um vicio que eu muito abomino,
 Desejando muito que a justiça o castigue;
 Por ele não queria bater-me, mas devo;
 Por ele não devo bater-me, mas estou
 Em guerra entre querer e não querer.⁴²

This translation uses line and syllable breaks to bring out the force of Isabella's conflict here. It builds to a crescendo through the use of repetition, giving the words themselves a hypnotic quality in performance. Enjambement in the final line stresses the notion of an Isabella "at war" with herself, which makes the audience interested in what Isabella is going to say next.

Moreover, as Peter Brook points out, the transitions between verse and prose in the Shakespearean text signal an important movement between the "rough" and the "holy". The "alienating and humanizing" prose of the low-life characters enables an alternative perspective on those in authority, but it also provides a negative reference against which Isabella's radical valuation of her chastity makes some sort of sense.⁴³ When the distinction between the "rough" and the "holy" becomes less visible, as in the less differentiated registers of the prose translation, this also tends to make Isabella's choice of chastity over her brother's life less comprehensible. The "rough" and the "holy" are subsumed in a pseudo-egalitarian discourse which obscures the different choices and contexts that lie behind these different forms of expression.

⁴² M. Gomes da Torre, *Medida por Medida*, (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2001), p. 60.

⁴³ Peter Brook, *The Empty Space*, (London: Penguin, 1990. First published McGibbon & Kee, 1968.). p. 99.

A prose translation like Rocha Afonso's could, therefore, only be half a theatrical tool for an actress playing Isabella. It clarified the meaning of the text and allowed the actress to convey effectively what was happening to the audience. However, much of the stage dynamic then had to come from the actress playing the role. It is noticeable, for instance, that Chambel's script contained several indications of where she wished to run together ideas over punctuation marks, as well as notes on pacing, emphasis and tone. Leaving such performative space for the actress to develop the character's speech patterns is perfectly common and not in itself problematic, but it becomes more so for a young actress taking on such a complex first major role. I would also question the assumption that prose is always more intelligible for theatre audiences than verse. On the contrary, verse may well *encourage* understanding more as it tends to make the audience more attentive to the performance.⁴⁴ It is easy to understand the desire of Comuna and Rocha Afonso not to create an obtuse, unnecessarily elaborate text for performance of a play like *Measure for Measure*, but I think this is a concern that makes more sense in terms of past Shakespeare translations used for the stage than present ones. I also feel that Rocha Afonso has a keen instinct for language that works on stage which need not necessarily exclude verse. However, while woman translators like Rocha Afonso continue to create translations that are never quite as moving, powerful or energetic as they might be out of a sense that theatrical translation is not literary translation, this perpetuates a vicious circle whereby theatrical translations are not published in book form because they are not considered 'literary' enough and the

⁴⁴ In a review of a recent translation of *The Tempest*, the director Jorge Silva Melo writes movingly about his childhood delight in coming across unknown words, for which he would then try to find a meaning. On the basis of this, he argues that a degree of complexity in a text acts as a stimulant rather than an impediment for "without secrets, there is no text; without obstacles, there is no way forward, and without difficulty, there really is no point". C.f. Jorge Silva Melo, "Que Horas São?" in *O Público* (12/1/2002). Certainly, the experience of private reading differs from that of performance, where understanding must be immediate, but Silva Melo's general point that complexity can act as a stimulant seems to me to be true in both the textual and performative contexts.

central role of women in translating for theatre is, like theatrical translation itself, not given the credit it deserves.

III. II. (b) Carla Chambel as Isabella

Carla Chambel was born in the year before Júlia Correia's 1977 performance, and one of the notable features of this Teatro Comuna production was its combination of younger actors like Chambel alongside long-standing company members.⁴⁵ Indeed, the production brought together two of the founder members of the group; João Mota: actor, director, teacher and guiding force of the group and Carlos Paulo, who returned to the company for this production to play the Duke.

In Mota's directions to the actors and actresses, he asked them to ally simplicity and truthfulness in their acting with 'the technique of the word'.⁴⁶ When preparing for the role, Chambel concentrated on forging connections between actress and character in order to convey the representational truthfulness demanded by the director. In this

⁴⁵ It should be said, however, that the older Comuna actress Manuela Couto was originally to play Isabella, but had to drop out because of illness roughly a month after rehearsals began. Mota had first thought Chambel, at 21, was too young to play the role. Chambel missed a month of rehearsed readings with the other actors because she joined them at this later stage.

⁴⁶ Personal interview with Carla Chambel, (26/7/ 2002). Subsequent quotations from this interview indicated in single quotation marks. Chambel described the acting style of the production as "naturalistic", a term it is important to define for the purposes of this chapter. Patrice Pavis defines naturalism as an acting style which "aims at producing illusion by reinforcing the impression of mimetic reality and by inducing the actor to identify wholly with the character, all of which is supposed to occur behind an invisible fourth wall that separates the audience from the stage." C.f. Patrice Pavis, *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. Trans. by Christine Schantz of *Dictionnaire du Théâtre*, Paris: Dunod, 1996). His definition encompasses theatre work from the 'classical' period of nineteenth century naturalism, such as that by Ibsen or Strindberg as well as more modern 'neo-naturalistic' forms like soap operas or English kitchen-sink drama. I believe Chambel is using the term 'naturalistic' here in two senses. On the one hand, a 'naturalistic' acting style contrasts with a more overtly theatrical, declamatory style. 'Naturalistic' here is used as an equivalent for the 'natural'. She is also using it in a more Stanislavskian, psychological sense, to describe an actor's search for a character's inner truth through establishing parallels with their own experiences. Here, 'naturalistic' is synonymous with 'realistic'. Mota's comments on the similarities between the contemporary political context and the dramatic world of the play also suggest a reflection of the social 'real' within this notion of 'naturalistic'. The production style overall combined naturalistic elements with anti-naturalistic elements such as the minimalist set and the non-period costumes. Yet as the actors and the text were so central to the production, and as a translation in prose tends to reinforce a naturalistic style of acting, I would argue that naturalistic elements predominated over the anti-naturalistic in the production as a whole.

respect, Isabella's religious convictions represented a potential difficulty, for Chambel did not have strong religious beliefs of her own. As she admitted 'it's difficult to believe we can really save someone through prayer'. However, she found herself spontaneously reciting the Lord's Prayer after rehearsing her encounter with Claudio, and came to understand how important it might be for Isabella to maintain these beliefs throughout her different ordeals. It is revealing that Chambel described this moment of understanding as important for both actress and character, suggesting the degree to which she sensed the two merging as rehearsals progressed.

In performance, Chambel brought a freshness to the role and conveyed Isabella's thoughts and changing emotional states to the audience in a clear, direct way. Her youth helped the audience to sympathise with her predicament, and the absence of many stage conventions associated with the role enabled the audience to see before them not merely the dilemma of a novice, but that of any young woman who finds herself in an impossible situation. Mota had studied with Peter Brook, and the influence of the author of *The Empty Space* was clear in the minimalist set, which put the emphasis heavily on the acting skills of the performers. However, this was offset by the production's rather bizarre costumes which were designed by the same student team who created the set. Indeed Chambel linked the two, joking that the same student team who created the minimalist set compensated for their restraint in the area of stage design by creating over-elaborate costumes. She considered the costumes, which could not be linked to any particular historical period, the most negative aspect of the Comuna production. This is a view echoed in several newspaper reviews of the play. One even complained that the costumes were like a "permanent noise" throughout the production.⁴⁷ In relation to Chambel's own costume, the designers first suggested she play the part in high heels for extra height. Then the costume they designed for her had a large slit up the front.

⁴⁷ João Carneiro, "Crimes e Castigo" in *O Expresso*, April 1997.

Chambel protested that a character such as Isabella would be unlikely to reveal her legs in this way and ended up having to place a skirt underneath, which made the costume uncomfortable and unwieldy on stage. For her performances, Chambel was dressed in a constricting blue pin-stripe suit with a white skirt underneath (see photograph no. 6 at the end of this chapter). She confessed that the simple white T-shirt and long white skirt she had worn in rehearsal had felt much more comfortable.

Her performance was reviewed very positively in the press. *O Expresso*, for instance, considered that she “did full justice to the play and the character, attaining an exemplary coherence between speech and gesture. Her clarity and rigour were ideal for bringing out the character’s full potential”.⁴⁸ Eugénia Vasques, in the same newspaper, spoke of Chambel’s “paradoxically sweet and determined Isabella”, while *A Capital* considered her performance “exemplarily human”.⁴⁹ The reviews suggest the performance’s success in naturalistic terms as many of them encompass assessments of the actress and the character simultaneously. They also tend to blur technical assessments of the actress’ performance with moral judgements of the character. This was, however, even more noticeable in the harsh reviews of Alfredo Brissos’ Angelo, which often reflected a distaste for the character as much as an assessment of the actor’s technical ability.

In *A Capital*’s review of the play, an explicit contrast was drawn between the more naturalistic acting styles of the younger actors and the more old-fashioned, declamatory style of some of the older members of the company. The reviewer’s sympathies here were very much on the side of Chambel and the younger actors. Similarly, in the *Expresso* review, the actresses in the production were singled out “not

⁴⁸ “fazendo total justiça à peça e à personagem, conseguindo uma coerência exemplar entre discurso verbal e discurso gestual. A sua clareza e rigor são o material ideal para conferir à personagem a dimensão requerida”. *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Ana Paula Homem, “Shakespeare à Medida da Comuna” in *A Capital*, April 1997.

only for their competence, but for a frankly contemporary overall attitude.” This suggests something of the historical importance of the production for Comuna in progressively replacing the more outdated acting style connected with the company’s past with a more naturalistic style of acting that reflected their present. This encompassed not only stage performances, but also rehearsal practice. Chambel noted, for instance, that while the younger actors prepared for rehearsal with voice and body warm-ups, the older actors did not join in with these. Chambel also identified what she called a ‘transitional’ group of actors, which included Alfredo Brissos and Cristina Cavalinhos (*Mistress Overdone*), who mediated this exchange between theatrical generations. This generation of actors had been with the company long enough to be aware of Comuna’s ‘house style’, yet had also been involved in other theatrical experiences which gave them an outside perspective on this ‘house style’.

III. II. (c) Paternalistic Modes of Theatrical Exchange

A stress on the naturalistic undoubtedly represented an important transition in acting styles for Comuna. In its clarity and precision it was effective in communicating what is a somewhat complex dramatic narrative. However, the invoking the naturalistic as a basis for creation of character often relies on an unexamined equation of what is ‘natural’ with what is ‘normal’ in its claims to represent the psychological and social ‘real’. As such, it tends towards replicating existing social norms such as those which define gender roles and behaviour. Moreover, as this section argues, the emphasis on the naturalistic tends to reproduce the social relations surrounding the performance in the performance itself.

In Comuna's *Measure for Measure*, for instance, the dynamics between company members fuelled a paternalistic form of naturalistic performance. As a founding member of Comuna, Mota was a well-known and much-respected figure while Chambel was a virtual unknown at the time. Although Chambel was keen to emphasise how useful Mota's guidance had been, this gendered hierarchy between director and actress was reflected in decision-making about how the role was to be played. Similarly, the actor who played the Duke, Carlos Paulo, was a longstanding Comuna member who had returned to the company to play the role. Chambel spoke of the sense of 'protection' around him and her own awe of his reputation. She stressed his readiness to answer questions she might want to ask. Yet she also admitted that the work on constructing their stage relationship came primarily from her and that her admiration for him had made it difficult for her to question what he was doing. Undoubtedly, as Chambel herself recognised, such experiences formed part of the passing on of theatrical experience from one generation to another. However, they also tended to privilege a paternalistic model of theatrical exchange which placed the male director and leading male actors in the position of theatrical 'father' to the young actress as theatrical 'daughter'. These working relationships were, in turn, reflected in the production's representation of the Isabella, Duke and Angelo triangle. The company's press release has Mota single out the Duke as emblematic of the dramatic and social transformations theatre can effect:

(...)(t)his is what the character of the Duke does: he leads each person to reveal their inner selves, because all the characters in the play, like us, live their lives behind masks.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ "É o que faz a personagem do Duque: leva a que cada um se revele como é interiormente, porque todas as personagens da peça, tal como nós, vivem uma vida atrás de mascaras". Comuna Press Release, April/May 1997. This idea also appears in the production programme.

Similarly, in the production programme, Mota notes a parallel tendency towards fanaticism in both Angelo and Isabella, yet argues that Isabella is saved from extremism “because she recognises in the Duke a man who brings people together”.⁵¹ Both these statements reveal a paternalistic view of the role of the Duke in the play which glosses over his manipulation of the women characters. In the production itself, when the Duke is comforting Isabella after her visit to Claudio, the stage direction was for Chambel to play the scene “as if she were a child”, which made of the Duke a benign, fatherly figure.⁵² In her first scene with Angelo, the stage direction for Isabella’s powerful speech on authority called for her to deliver the speech in a manner that was “innocent like clear water”.⁵³ Yet it is precisely at this moment that Isabella is revealing some of her rhetorical strengths. Although she may be naïve, she seems anything but innocent, as even Lucio comments on the knowledge her statements reveal.⁵⁴ Chambel noted that Mota had told her to delay any anger at Angelo until the end of the play, when she thinks her brother is dead. However, she also admitted that when her anger finally emerged, it was ‘more contained than explosive’. It is my contention that playing Isabella as innocent in these early scenes may well have contributed towards this later containment.

III. II. (d) Introducing Fissures into the Fabric of Naturalism

In its claim to reflect the real, naturalism has much in common with theatrical realism. Indeed, it could be argued that naturalism intensifies the connection with the real as it

⁵¹ Programme for Comuna production of *Medida por Medida*, p. 3.

⁵² This direction is taken from Carla Chambel’s script of the play, p.109. My thanks to her for making this available to me.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁵⁴ After Isabella’s comment that status, rather than justice, often decides punishment, Lucio comments “Art avised o’ that? More on’t” (II, II, 136). My thanks to Keith Harle for drawing my attention to the distinction between innocence and naïvety in Isabella.

purports to draw its characters' inner as well as outer lives. In a continuing debate within feminist performance theory, the consequences of theatrical realism for women have invariably been characterised as negative. Sue-Ellen Case, a particularly vociferous opponent, has cautioned "Cast the realism aside – its consequences for women are deadly".⁵⁵ This is because realism tends to position women as part of, if not *the* 'problem' that spurs dramatic conflict, but whose resolution implies the restoration of patriarchal control. Thus, Isabella's chastity is cast as a 'problem' which then makes marriage to the Duke unavoidable. Naturalism also tends to represent conventional behaviour by women characters as natural and hence any deviation from that as unnatural. This is bound to affect the representation of a character like Isabella, who in many respects represents the negation of the conventional trajectory for women.

Nevertheless, if this suggests that feminist mimesis is a contradiction in terms, it is also true that much feminist theatre has relied on realism and naturalism to convey its message about society's treatment of women. Critics like Elin Diamond have argued, therefore, that rather than discard realism altogether, a more fruitful strategy would be to harness the representational power of realism whilst also challenging its ideological conservatism in relation to women. To this end, Diamond proposes what she labels a Gestic feminist criticism of theatrical practice, which is based on an intertextual reading of Brechtian and feminist theory. Diamond points out, for instance, that when spectators "see" gender in a performance, they are more often than not reading into it "the gender ideology of the culture".⁵⁶ However, when gender is "alienated or foregrounded":

⁵⁵ Sue-Ellen Case, "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic", excerpt printed in Henry Abelove *et al*, *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), p. 305.

⁵⁶ Elin Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism" in Carol Martin (ed.), *On and Beyond the Stage: A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre and Performance*, (London & New York, 1996), p.123. Page numbers for subsequent quotations from this article are indicated in parentheses.

The spectator is enabled to see a sign system *as* a sign system – the appearance, words, gestures, ideas, attitudes, etc., that comprise the gender lexicon become so many illusionistic trappings to be put on or shed at will. (123)

Diamond refers to such moments of alienation as moments of feminist *gestus*. They are instances in performance when “the gendered bodies of spectator, actor/subject, and character” are all working together but “*never harmoniously*” (my emphasis, 131) in order that “the sex/gender system, theatre politics, and social history cathect and become visible” (133).

Such moments of feminist *gestus* function in a way that is similar to the utopian space Mota claims theatre can promote. They indicate the unnaturalness of the purportedly natural and thus make its transformation possible. They are spaces of performative *possibilities*. The stress on a naturalistic performance style in the Comuna production meant that this theatrical laboratory space where alternatives could emerge became secondary to a notion of the production as a reflection of the ‘real’. As such, moments of feminist *gestus* were only able to emerge intermittently. These moments of feminist *gestus* can be characterised as production moments that interrupted the smooth flow of naturalism so that the gender politics of the dramatic text and the theatrical context were temporarily put on show.

One such moment can be identified in Rocha Afonso’s translation, where Angelo makes his proposal to Isabella in a scene explicitly concerned with the way power is exercised sexually (II, IV). Here, the translator takes on a more active role in the text and comments on the gender mechanics of the encounter in what might be termed a movement of translation ‘slippage’. Isabella states in the Shakespearean text ‘Women, help heaven! Men their creation mar in profiting by them’ (II, IV, 128-29). The gender ambiguity of ‘their’ in English is resolved in the translation with the use of

the feminine “aviltam-nas”.⁵⁷ The emphasis, then, is already on the damage men do to *women* rather than to themselves. Then, when Angelo instructs Isabella to act like a woman ‘by putting on the destined livery’ (II, IV, 139), Rocha Afonso translates this as “O papel que a Natureza vos destinou (52)(“the *role* that *Nature* has destined you for”). The uneasy juxtaposition of “role” and “Nature” leaves an ambiguity at the heart of “woman” which is cast here as both essential condition and social/theatrical performance. Soon after, Isabella chides Angelo with the words ‘I know your virtue hath a licence in’t/Which seems a little fouler than it is/To pluck on others’ (II, IV, 146-8). Rocha Afonso translates ‘To pluck on others’ as “Mas é uma *armadilha*” (but this is a *trap*, 53). While in the Shakespearean text, Isabella’s chastisement seems designed to make Angelo reconsider his words, the combined steps of the translator leading up to this moment in the translation suggest that what Isabella begins to perceive is the trap of gender itself, specifically female gender. In performance, this warning is transmitted via the actress to the audience in something of a feminist ‘look out, he’s behind you’ which alerts the audience to Angelo’s manipulative attempt to trap Isabella as either “woman” or “none” (nun).⁵⁸

Another moment of feminist *gestus* came at the end of the Comuna production. Performances like those of Stevenson and Dionisotti have helped to establish something of a performance tradition of open-endedness at this point. This is true to such an extent that contemporary directors more often have to justify why Isabella should marry the Duke than why she shouldn’t. Chambel explained that Mota had told her to wait twenty seconds after the Duke had made his proposal, and then take his hand in a gesture of

⁵⁷ Maria João da Rocha Afonso, *Medida por Medida*, unpublished translation 1996/97 p.52. All subsequent quotations from the translation indicated in double quotation marks, with page numbers in parentheses. In Gomes da Torre’s translation, for instance, it is men who mar *their* creation in attempting to profit from women.

⁵⁸ When I suggested to Rocha Afonso that she might have taken on a more active role in the translation of this scene, she replied that it was not something she was conscious of, but considering her views on the trapping of women by men in such situations, it was quite possible that this had happened.

acceptance. Chambel's stage direction in the script reads "my hand is the answer".⁵⁹ Yet although the wider decision as to whether Isabella accepted the Duke's proposal was taken out of the actress' hands, her physical and verbal responses to the proposal varied from performance to performance. More often than not, Chambel admitted that she reacted to the Duke as more of a father figure than a potential husband. Only in one performance did she verbalise a 'yes' for the first and only time. In other performances, she used the substantial room for manoeuvre offered by physical movement and facial gestures to indicate a wide range of different emotions. This negotiation of the ending was prompted by Mota referring to an English production where the actress had been allowed to make up her own mind about the Duke's proposal right up until the first night. Thus, the kind of redefinitional work undertaken by earlier generations of English actresses so that the 'happy ending' not be taken for granted was, in turn, influencing later performances like that of Chambel. Such exchanges were functioning as an alternative form of passing on theatrical experience to the paternalistic model prevalent in theatrical practice, despite being mediated through male directors and apparently bypassing Correia's earlier work in the Portuguese context.

When discussing what elements of her performance she would change if she performed the role again, Chambel gave two examples which indicate she was herself interested in working towards breaking the seamlessness of naturalism. Firstly, she felt that she might like to emphasise desire on Isabella's part in the scenes with Angelo, echoing Juliet Stevenson's view that Angelo and Isabella seem to create a sexual friction in their arguments in Act II Scene II. With Isabella a desiring subject, there is a fracture in the creation of character which would be a rich seam for an actress to explore. Moreover, this complexity could encourage a wider range of audience responses to Isabella. Secondly, she mentioned having seen the Nottingham Playhouse

⁵⁹ From Chambel's marked script of the play, p. 129.

touring production of the play in Porto later in the year where Angelo's solitary, anguished meditation on his attraction for Isabella at the end of Act II Scene II was interrupted by Isabella knocking on his door to check what time he wanted her to arrive the next day. For Chambel, this introduced a subtle touch of humour which she had enjoyed. Besides interrupting the process of audience identification solely with Angelo's 'dilemma', such episodes also open up an important space for the audience to recognise the difference between the fantasy woman Angelo is creating in his monologue and the 'real' character of Isabella.

Finally, I would like to return to a production possibility that remained latent in the Comuna production, but which might have also helped to challenge naturalistic gender assumptions. Chambel's script contained a stage direction from Mota for the difficult final act which encouraged her to perform as if she were "playing a role". Chambel also commented in interview that she found it strange that there wasn't a scene in the text between Isabella and Mariana where Isabella says something along the lines of 'are you sure you know what you're doing?', or 'are you sure this is what you want to do?' These two comments set me thinking about the very short scene between Mariana and Isabella just before the final act (IV, VI). The scene appears to begin in the middle of a conversation between the two women. In the scene itself, they discuss their reluctance to do what the Duke has asked them to do, but then accept his written instructions. What if before they began speaking, they exchanged letters of their own and read them silently before putting them away? Or whispered something into each other's ear? Then, they could continue with the 'script' the Duke has provided them with for the rest of the scene. They might even compare his 'script' with their own. This could be a tantalising glimpse of the existence of an 'alternative script' for the final act, created by the two women, about which even the audience know only that it might not

be the one the Duke has given them. This could challenge the textual representation of the two women as manipulated by the Duke in this scene and the final act.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how particular social and historical conditions encouraged the choice of *Measure for Measure* for performance in England and Portugal in two different time periods. In the earlier period, English radical political movements like feminism prompted the new attention given to the representation of traditionally ‘difficult’ Shakespearean women characters like Isabella. Feminism also provided a critical vocabulary for those like Carol Rutter who sought to discuss the performances of the actresses in different terms. In Portugal, the 1974 Revolution created a space where the issues of the play were particularly pertinent for the CCE/TAS production. At the same time, women’s roles both within and outside the theatre were on the cusp of significant changes during the period following the Revolution. Julia Correia’s Isabella illustrates how women negotiated this dynamic, and in her interpretation of Isabella there was a concern to explore questions of power as they affected women. She was also indicative of the nascent professionalisation of the actress in this period. As a result, although expressed differently, there was a similarity between what women like Correia and English actresses like Dionisotti and Stevenson were working towards, although there seems to have been little direct theatrical contact between the different cultures and no sense of exchange in relation to the representation of Isabella.

In the later period, Stella Gonet played Isabella in a context where the gains of radical movements were being eroded by a Government committed to family values. The production built upon previous theatrical work in its portrayal of a warm, mature and rational Isabella. It institutionalised a sense that the play can bring out the sexual

inequalities of public life for women. Yet the evocation of a psychological ‘flaw’ in Isabella, which surfaced in Gonet’s screams and shrieks, illustrates how a tendency to pathologise Isabella persists in a modified form. In Portugal, Carla Chambel performed the role under the very different conditions of disillusionment with the Socialist government in the late 1990’s and their abandonment of abortion reform. The theatrical conditions under which she played the role also differed from Correia’s earlier performance. Women were more widely represented in theatre in the 1990’s. Having created an audience for their theatre, Comuna chose to perform *Medida por Medida* to celebrate twenty-five years of existence, rather than choosing it to establish a reputation for a new group. By this time also, theatrical information was travelling much faster, so that Chambel was aware of how actresses in England had been transforming the role and later saw a touring production by an English company in Portugal herself. This also meant that theatrical exchange was not restricted to what male directors and actors communicated to the actress within the national context, but also included a more direct form of exchange between English actresses to Portuguese actresses.

Such intercultural connections provide vital support for actresses performing roles like that of Isabella. The experience of the English actresses, for instance, enabled Chambel to negotiate her own attitude to the Duke’s proposal at the end of the play. However, other factors restricted the extent of her redefinitional work. Although a naturalistic acting style represented an important transition within the history of the company, it also tended to reinforce gender norms through an unexamined connection between the natural and the conventional. Despite the valuable experience passed on to Chambel from João Mota and Carlos Paulo, the context for the passing on of such experience remained paternalistic and this influenced expectations about how Chambel should play the role of Isabella. While Maria João da Rocha Afonso’s prose translation

allowed the actress and the audience important access to the language of the Shakespearean text, some of Isabella's dramatic power was one of the "losses" engendered by this focus on intelligibility. These "losses" make sense in terms of the priorities of Teatro Comuna as a company and in terms of its audience. Yet precisely because they are a company that does respond to change, it is worth highlighting the consequences of these losses for their future productions of Shakespeare.

In terms of the relationship between written text and performance text, three features of the representation of Isabella in *Measure for Measure* are worth drawing attention to. The first is the way that social change influences what is considered to be sexual transgression and the meanings attached to that sexual transgression in performance. Before Dionisotti and Stevenson's pioneering theatre work, for instance, Isabella's sexual transgression was defined primarily through her refusal to place her brother's life before her chastity, and this sexual transgression was defined negatively. Dionisotti and Stevenson, however, redefined Isabella's priorities positively, making her emblematic of the independent, committed woman feminism itself promoted. More modern interpretations, such as that of Stella Gonet have widened the impact of this individual representation in order to illustrate the constraints placed on women in public life. In Portugal, Júlia Correia's post-revolutionary representation of Isabella illustrated the contradictory impulses of the Revolution in terms of both women and religion. Carla Chambel's later performance took place within a political context that explicitly focused upon the repressive elements of religion as regards women's sexuality, yet also reflected important changes in women's roles ushered in by the 1990's.

The second feature has to do with the way in which particular moments of a production of the play have now become explicitly identified with Isabella's sexual transgression. The most obvious instance of this is the ending of the play, specifically

Isabella's response to the Duke's proposal. The various responses discussed in this chapter, from silent acceptance, to the complex emotional response of slapping and then kissing the Duke, to using facial and physical gestures to indicate Isabella's contradictory feelings show how this moment has become a symbolic indication of a production's gender politics. Isabella's two scenes with Angelo are another instance of this. The way in which Isabella uses her verbal skills to defeat Angelo in their first encounter is often complemented by a proxemic illustration of their changed relationship. An example of this is the way in which Juliet Stevenson sat on Angelo's desk as her power over him increased. In the second encounter, Isabella's recognition that Angelo is now to use his power over her is similarly conveyed by proxemic elements that emphasise the physical brutality of his abuse of power. In the BBC production, for instance, Corin Redgrave pulled Juliet Aubrey across the floor by her hair to make his 'purpose' clear. However, the translator Maria João da Rocha Afonso's 'intervention' in this scene in the Comuna production indicates that the way in which Isabella is trapped here can be conveyed equally well either verbally or physically.

Thirdly, in a theatrical parallel to the Shakespearean problem play's combination of tragedy and comedy, the performance texts created for modern productions of *Measure for Measure* tend to foreground contradictions between systems of staging in their representation of sexual transgression. Representations of Isabella often function as intersections for these contradictions. For example, the Comuna production of the play was characterised by a mixture of naturalistic and anti-naturalistic elements. Such a combination itself reflected the tension between a vision of the staging of the political as a reflection of the real and a vision of the staging of the political as a transformation of the real. In this context, anti-naturalistic elements of the staging such as costume were combined onstage with a naturalistic acting style in Carla Chambel's

representation of Isabella. Similarly, the way in which the Duke's acrylic costume gave off electric shocks each time Júlia Correia approached him in the TAS/CCE production meant that although her speeches to him were subservient, her physical movements were of repulsion. At first glance, the RSC production seems to be an instance where the different elements of the performance text worked harmoniously to create a production which focused specifically on the experiences of women in public life, but even here, Stella Gonet's gasps and screams created moments of contradiction with other elements of the staging.

This chapter has emphasised how adapting canonical texts for different cultural contexts can open up new "identity spaces" for women performers as well as audiences in those cultures. However, it also makes clear that some equally important redefinitional work has been occurring in non-English speaking cultures, which does not tend to get discussed to the same extent. How many English actresses, for example, are even aware of work done in a Continental European context? For this reason, my profound wish is that the work of Correia and Chambel, in its turn, opens up new "identity spaces" for English performers of Isabella in the future.

Yet research for this chapter has also highlighted some of the difficulties encountered by actresses in Portuguese theatre that prevent such exchanges taking place. Transmission of theatrical experience tends to occur orally and, because many independent companies are based around one charismatic male figure, frequently on a paternalistic basis. As such, while lines of transmission are more easily traced from men to men, particularly from male director to male director or male director to male actor, such lines for women are more fragmented, less easy to recover and more than likely to pass through men in mediatory positions. This can mean actresses often find themselves 'reinventing the wheel' each time they take on a role like Isabella. It is noticeable, for

instance, how there was no direct line of transmission from Correia's performance to Chambel's. This can make redefining women's roles in Shakespeare a lonely and difficult business.

Perhaps what needs to be emphasised most, therefore, is that despite the current appearance of a European theatrical culture which moves effortlessly back and forward over national borders, the reality of such a culture actually seems to be becoming increasingly remote for women. Indeed, the earlier work done by Correia, Dionisotti and Stevenson seems to have more in common than that of later Isabella's like Chambel and Stella Gonet. Governments and theatre bureaucrats nowadays tend to favour short-term, media-friendly intercultural initiatives which do not necessarily help towards the creative juxtaposition of different European theatre cultures. For women, the consequences of this are greater marginalisation as intercultural exchanges become defined as the trips of well-known male directors and actors to a different cultural context for a one-off production. It is to be hoped that by recording and discussing the work of actresses such as Correia and Chambel alongside work by Dionisotti, Stevenson and Gonet, an alternative network of intercultural exchanges within European theatre can be furthered.

5. Isabella (Stella Gonet) 'responds' to the proposal of the Duke (Michael Feast) in the RSC *Measure for Measure*. Copyright J.H. Bunting. Courtesy of the RSC Archives.

6. Isabella (Carla Chambel) confronts the Duke (Carlos Paulo) and Angelo (Alfredo Brissos) in Teatro Comuna's *Medida por Medida*. Courtesy of Teatro Comuna.

