

Chapter 7: A Bastard Art: Sexual and Theatrical Transgression in *King Lear*

Theatre has always been a bastard art.

(Shelley Berc, "Theatre of the Mind: A Fugue in Two Parts", 2002)¹

Introduction

Much has been claimed for the distinctiveness of the theatrical experience in relation to other artistic and media forms. Invariably, such claims invoke notions of theatrical presence which cast theatre as live in a way that other artistic experiences are not. The dramatist Jacinto Lucas Pires, for example, contrasts the distance of the televisual experience with the intimacy of theatre:

(i)n a time of television sets and remote controls, theatre serves as a place for life and invention. It enables the invention of a closeness, of a present which is more present, of a present which is given.²

From this perspective, the liveness of the theatrical event grants it a greater authenticity and this authenticity in turn guarantees it a special status. Theatre is cast as the pure artistic form with television and film as its bastard poor relations. Yet, as the opening quote to the chapter indicates, the boundaries between theatre and other artistic forms have never been as clearly defined as those who argue the case for the specificity of the theatrical experience might wish. Theatre's status, after all, has come as much from its

¹ Shelley Berc, "Theatre of the Mind: A Fugue in Two Parts" in Maria M. Delgado & Caridad Svich (eds.) *Theatre in Crisis? Performance Manifestos For A New Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 214.

² "Num tempo de televisores e de comandos à distância o teatro serve como lugar de vida e de invenção – invenção de uma proximidade, de um presente mais presente, de um presente que se dá". Jacinto Lucas Pires, "O Teatro Serve como Lareira do Mundo," in *Teatro Escritos 1: Para Que é Que Serve o Teatro?*, (Lisboa: Cotovia, 1998), p. 40.

association with a literary dramatic canon as from a tradition of theatrical performance. Theatrical scenography has consistently borrowed from the visual arts and architecture. Musicians who work in theatre have rarely worked solely in that environment. Indeed, Paulo Eduardo Carvalho has argued that theatre is, by its very nature, transdisciplinary because it crosses several languages and artistic areas.³ Moreover, similar technological innovations have been introduced across a variety of areas, which currently not only enhance theatre's similarity with other forms, but also challenge the notion of theatre as an exclusively live event. Philip Auslander, for instance, astutely points out that the insistence on the special liveness of the theatrical event masks the fact that "the general response of live performance to the oppression and economic superiority of mediatized forms has been to become as much like them as possible."⁴ He argues that theatre's "ontology of liveness" constitutes a sentimental, backward-looking response to the increasing mutual dependence of the 'real' on the 'reel'.⁵

Undoubtedly, there are negative implications in the increasing standardisation of artistic forms. Large, spectacular shows can now be performed almost simultaneously in different geographical contexts with the minimum of sensitivity to cultural difference. This encourages the continuing cultural dominance of those who can afford to stage these shows or to sell the copyright. Similarly, audiences expect the same level of visual and sound effects in theatrical performance as they do from television and film and come to the theatre to see well-known actors and actresses looking exactly as they have seen them on television. Yet this chapter argues that recognition of the essentially

³ Paulo Eduardo Carvalho, "Escutar Pelos Olhos, Ver Pelas Vozes: Metamorfoses Perceptivas em *Um Hamlet a Mais*, review of Ricardo Pais's production of *Um Hamlet a mais* at the TNSJ, Porto, in the TNSJ magazine *Duas Colunas*, n° 6, Set. 2003, p. 17.

⁴ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), p.7. The phrase "ontology of liveness" is also Auslander's.

⁵ Indeed, it is interesting how ahistorical such notions as authenticity and truth as applied to theatre reveal themselves to be. They do not come to terms, for instance, with the long-standing negative view of theatre as the place *par excellence* of the artificial, the counterfeit and the inauthentic, nor the ways in which modernism and postmodernism have contested the authenticity of notions of presence and liveness.

porous boundaries of the theatrical experience and a stress on transdisciplinarity represents a more productive starting point for analysis than attempts to define theatrical specificity. Moreover, this chapter argues that an insistence on the authenticity and truth of the theatrical experience tends towards marginalising anti-normative sexualities, which are, in turn, cast as inauthentic and untruthful representations. As such, a focus on porosity and transdisciplinarity more readily enables the queer to emerge in performance.⁶

The chapter focuses on connections between sexual and theatrical transgression as they are articulated in the representation of Edmund in *King Lear*. It analyses three productions of the play where the boundaries between theatre and other artistic/media forms are particularly on display; specifically the boundaries between theatre and television, between theatre and film and, in the third case, between literary text-based theatre and physical theatre based on *commedia dell'arte* and mime techniques. The chapter seeks to explore whether in these more 'fluid' productions, the representation of bastardy as a form of sexual transgression is subject to a similar fluidity, and to what extent it is the radical instability of Edmund as sexual transgressor that itself promotes such artistic fluidity. The first section of the chapter focuses upon the discontinuities of the textual representation of Edmund in *King Lear*, while the next section discusses how Portuguese translations of Edmund have conveyed this discontinuity. Section Three begins with an analysis of cultural politics in 1980's Portugal and the rise of the theatrical freelancer by way of an introduction to Diogo Infante's performance of the role for the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II. Section Four analyses a Dogme film in which *Lear* is positioned as a textual and performative intertext and the final section focuses

⁶ Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis, for instance, note how notions of theatricality as 'false performance' have often been associated with women while the authentic and the real have been associated with men. C.f. "Theatricality: an Introduction", in Thomas Postlewait & Tracy C. Davis, (eds.), *Theatricality*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-39.

upon a performance of the play by Footsbarn Theatre which challenged the centrality of the text in performance by privileging other theatrical languages, particularly the physical and the visual.

I. Bastardy in *King Lear*

The *New Penguin English Dictionary* defines the noun “bastard” in the following terms:

1. *offensive or archaic* an illegitimate child.
2. *informal* a. an offensive or disagreeable person, often used as a more general term of abuse. b. a person of a specified type: *Poor old bastard*.
3. something spurious, irregular, inferior, or of questionable origin.

In a second definition of “bastard” as an adjective, it also points to a use of the word to describe something or someone “lacking genuineness or authority; false”.⁷

Similarly, the *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea* notes that the Portuguese word “bastardo” can be used to describe an illegitimate child, but also a botanical hybrid or, in its adjectival form, handwriting with a slant. It describes one meaning of the term as something “which has undergone some modification in relation to the original or the more common, to the model; which presents characteristics that belong to various types”.⁸ In both languages, therefore, the definition of bastardy is woven together with a wider notion of irregularity or a deviation from the norm. Such definitions suggest that bastardy is particularly subject to resignification in fields with which it appears to have little in common. This, I would argue, might be due to the fact that bastardy is itself invariably a form of displacement. Although it is the illegitimate

⁷ *The New Penguin English Dictionary*, (London: Penguin, 2001. First published 2000).

⁸ “Que sofreu alguma modificação em relação ao tipo primitivo ou mais comum; ao modelo: que apresenta características que pertencem a vários tipos”. Academia das Ciências, *Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa Contemporânea*, (Lisboa: Verbo, 2001).

son or daughter who are described as bastards, the sexual transgression is usually considered to be that of the mother. Indeed, Kate Chedgzoy characterises the bastard's body as the "living embodiment of female transgression".⁹ Yet this culpabilisation of the mother is itself a displacement of male anxieties over paternity and lineage onto the mother's body. This double process of displacement means that bastardy itself is somewhat difficult to locate and embody. Its free-floating quality, where it is always located elsewhere, makes its representation particularly prone to shifts of meaning into other fields of signification.

This inability to localise bastardy and its meanings pervades the textual representation of bastardy in *King Lear*. Although Edmund's mother's transgression generates a series of *double entendres* at the beginning of the play, the blame for the infidelity appears to be placed more squarely on Gloucester, with Edmund cast as the agent of punishment for his transgression. Edgar voices this relational connection between the trajectories of Gloucester and Edmund in his final encounter with Edmund:

The gods are just and of our pleasant vices
 Make instruments to plague us:
 The dark and vicious place where thee he got
 Cost him his eyes. (V, III, 168-171)¹⁰

Yet it is only the legitimate son Edgar who makes this moralistic connection. Gloucester himself does not express a conventional moral sense of guilt at his infidelity. On the contrary, he retains a positive memory of the sexual encounter, for "there was good sport at his making" (I, I, 21-2). He also stresses that the love he has for his illegitimate son equals that for his legitimate son. Even after he suffers at the hands of Edmund, his

⁹ Kate Chedgzoy, *Shakespeare's Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.69 In *Lear*, for instance, Gloucester refers to Edgar as his son, but to Edmund as his mother's son.

¹⁰ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare, R.A. Foakes (ed.), (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997). All subsequent references are to this edition.

regret is expressed in terms of his easy credulity rather than the circumstances that led to Edmund's birth.

When Edmund appears alone in Act I Scene II, he explicitly rejects any connection between his bastardy and a stable meaning that might be attributed to it. Indeed, it might well have been in France that he has spent the last nine years away from the court, for he expresses a very Montaignean scepticism of "the plague of custom" (I, II, 3) which would extrapolate a moral "baseness" from the conditions of his birth. He resignifies his bastardy as positive, rather than negative, for it has made him more vigorous and ardent than the legitimate sons created "within a dull stale tired bed". (I, II, 13) He also uses the social demonisation of bastardy as the basis of his opposition to the status quo, for if others consider him base because of his bastardy, this also sanctions him behaving in the way he does. He even expresses an incipient awareness of a social identity when he asks "Why brand they *us*/With base?" (I, II, 10). Yet these represent momentary rhetorical stopping off points rather than statements of belief for Edmund, rather like Iago's almost pathological throwing out of 'reasons why' he wants to revenge himself on Othello. Indeed, it is illustrative that the only time he uses his bastardy as a justification for his actions is when he attempts to convince Gloucester of Edgar's treachery. Ventriloquising Edgar, Edmund invokes his bastardy to add extra conviction to his invented narrative:

He (Edgar) replied
 'Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think,
 If I would stand against thee, would the reposal
 Of any trust, virtue or worth in thee
 Make thy words faithed?' (II, I, 67-70)

This discursive invocation of bastardy highlights the social prejudices of others, rather than any deficiency in himself. He mentions his bastardy more effectively to persuade

Gloucester rather than to explain himself. Therefore, although Edmund is keenly aware of the social and material consequences of his bastardy, he explicitly disconnects himself from a view that it determines his identity.

Nevertheless, as Jonathan Dollimore has pointed out, Edmund's radical scepticism is constructed on the basis of his social marginality:

(h)is illegitimate exclusion from society gives him an insight into the ideological basis of that society even as it renders him vulnerable and dependent upon it.¹¹

As a result, he fails to avoid just the credulity he derides in other members of his family. His pursuit by Goneril and Regan places him in the position of sexual object rather than subject, highlighted by the fact that he leaves them to decide who will wed him. His delight on hearing that he was loved by both of them as he lies dying is almost childlike. In this final act, such naivety also seems to have extended to his public role as a soldier. He expects to be given power after the defeat of Cordelia and her troops only to find that Albany expressly forbids this on grounds that continue to invoke his status as a "(h)alf-blooded fellow". He dies in an encounter which, by the laws of combat, should never have taken place. As Goneril protests "(t)hou art not vanquished,/But cozened and beguiled" (V, III, 151-2). His 'repentance' speech is perhaps the ultimate indication of the defeat of his radical scepticism. He accepts the influence of the wheel of fortune in guiding all destinies, including his own, and avows a desire to do good "(d)espite of mine own nature". This is no Iago who refuses to explain the evil he has done even under the threat of torture. He ends the play gladly accepting the common sense arguments he has rejected scornfully at the beginning of the play and reinforces a

¹¹ Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion and Ideology in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1984. First published 1983), p.201.

reductive, essentialist notion of the bastard as merely looking for the love their outsider status has denied them.

Yet rather than read the trajectory of Edmund in a way that reinforces such dominant moral and ideological views, it is possible to read his discontinuity in a more progressive way. As Alan Sinfield points out, “(p)ersonal consistency, like stability of language and referent, is a myth”.¹² The illusion of a stable, continuous character is created through the text’s “subjectivity effects”, which are themselves part of ideologically inflected discursive regimes. Sinfield notes, for instance that discontinuity in female Shakespearean characters is normally not read as such because ideologies of femininity naturalise such inconsistency as normal for women. Similarly, it is only in the context of a particular ideology of bastardy as disruptive of the social and moral order that Edmund’s “disjointed sequence of positions” makes sense. His scepticism, his passivity with women, his repentance, his prowess in battle each separate the character into fragments that only the ideological binary of legitimate/illegitimate can render meaningful as a whole. The impression of his coherence is sustained by theatrical devices such as soliloquy which provide an approximation of what Sinfield labels “continuous consciousness”. However, an excess of stories about bastardy as they are attached to Edmund tends also to splinter such coherence. There are traces of a medieval, Christian view of infidelity as sin and the bastard as a child of sin, a humanist view of tolerance of difference and intolerance of prejudice, an early modern notion of subjectivity as created by individuals rather than determined by God, a social view of bastardy as disrupting the social order because it disrupts the family unit and a naturalising view of the bastard as closer to nature and therefore part of the natural

¹² Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.64. Sinfield discusses the notion of character as “a disjointed sequence of positions” in relation to Desdemona.

order. This excess of signification inevitably leads to a crisis in the textual legibility of the bastard.

II. Translating Bastardy

In Portuguese translations of the play, the excess of signification that attaches itself to the bastard's body is often smoothed over by the translators. According to Maria João da Rocha Afonso, one of the first Portuguese adaptations of the play by Júlio Dantas (1906) made Goneril and Regan more obvious villains, but softened the references to bastardy so as not to offend the public.¹³ Yet rather than toning down references to bastardy, what is noticeable about Dantas's adaptation is the way he attempts to explain social attitudes towards it. Gloucester's teasing of Edmund and his mother, for instance, includes an added recognition that much of the adverse reaction to bastardy results from simple prejudice:

Fui eu que me incumbi da sua educação.
É de uso renegar os filhos naturais.
Mas nós temos, talvez, preconceitos demais,
(Primeiro Quadro, Scena II)¹⁴

(His education was at my charge.
It is customary natural children to abjure
But in this, perhaps, too many scruples endure
First Quarto, Scene II)

¹³ Maria João da Rocha Afonso, "As Versões Portuguesas de *King Lear*" in João Almeida Flor (ed.), *Colóquio sobre Shakespeare* (Lisboa: Gulbenkian, 1990), p.75. For a discussion of the translation of women's roles in the play see Chapter Three.

¹⁴ Júlio Dantas, *Rei Lear*, (Lisboa: Portugal-Brasil, 1906, 2nd ed. First published Lisboa: Viúva Tavares Cardoso, 1905), p.11. There are slight differences between this edition and the earlier edition of the translation.

Later in the same scene, this social stigma is made more explicit when Gloucester acknowledges the role of the Church and popular superstition in the creation of such prejudice:

Bem sei que é escandaloso o fruto do pecado,
 Que se deve ocultar, que é sangue amaldicoado,
 Que a Igreja o condena – e a Igreja tem razão
 Mas a fraqueza humana é digna de perdão,
 (Primeiro Quadro, Scena II)¹⁵

(Well I know sin's issue obscene,
 That it must be hidden, as blood unclean,
 That the Church condemns it – and is right to do this
 But human frailty deserves forgiveness
 First Quarto, Scene II)

Dantas also works the theme of bastardy into a rather curious initial exchange between Edmund and Curran. Edmund attributes Curran's initial reluctance to give him information to his bastard status, delivers his speech about Nature being his goddess, where he describes the sexual act between Gloucester and his mother as “quasi gémeo da morte” (almost akin to death), and then confides to Curran that he will tell him a secret because he knows that Curran, too, is illegitimate. Surprised, Curran quickly corrects him, saying that he was born of honourable parents. Edmund, petulantly, refuses to divulge more to him on the basis that if he is not illegitimate he will not understand.

In Dantas's adaptation, Edmund's relationship with Regan is based on recognition of each other as kindred spirits. As in the Shakespearean text, it is the two sisters who take the initiative. Regan attempts to win Edmund for herself by making clear that she sees through the hypocritical masking of his own ambition:

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.12

Somos dignos um do outro. Aqui onde me vês,
 Sou tão vil como tu – inda peor talvez!
 Olha-me bem, e vê se esta máscara engana
 Somos iguais na astúcia e na perfídia humana
 (Sétimo Quadro, Scena II) ¹⁶

(We are worthy of each other. Just to view me you know,
 I am evil like you – maybe more so!
 Look at me well, then see if this mask deceives
 We are equals in cunning and human treachery
 Seventh Quarto, Scene II)

Edmund himself is surprised by the extent to which the two sisters are willing to deceive each other:

Mater Hipocrisia, eu juro-te p'lo ceu
 Sabem-te manejar inda melhor do que eu!
 (Sétimo Quadro, Scena III) ¹⁷

Mother of all Hypocrisy, O, heaven on high
 They know how to use you better than I!
 (Seventh Quarto, Scene III)

However, by the time Kent issues a challenge to Edmund at the end of the play, the initial emphasis on the social and moral prejudice of others has slid into an essentialist sense that bastardy is not only a question of birth, but also of character, as Kent calls him “por berço e coração duas vezes bastardo” (twice bastard, in birth and heart, Seventh Quarto, Scene IX). ¹⁸

Even in more modern translations of the play, morality and propriety condition the translation of references to bastardy in the play. The Portuguese terms ‘legítimo’ and ‘ilegítimo’ are perfectly suitable for textual occasions where legitimate and illegitimate are used, such as when Edmund refers dismissively to Edgar as ‘legitimate Edgar’ (I, II,

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.232.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.238.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.258.

16). The adjectives ‘natural/desnaturado’ convey the thematically important pairing of the natural/unnatural, such as when Gloucester refers to Edmund as his “(l)oyal and natural boy” (II, I, 85). There is also the noun ‘bastardo’, which is common in modern translations for the sections where Edmund refers to his own bastardy. Yet for Gloucester’s “the whoreson must be acknowledged” (I, I, 22-3), the translations tend to downplay the insult conveyed in “whoreson”. There are two terms that would convey something of its charge. One is ‘filho da puta’ (literally, the son of a whore) and the other is ‘filho da mãe’ (the son of the mother, by implication therefore, without a father). Yet no translation has used an expression with anything like the charge of these two. Ricardo Alberty’s 1973 translation renders “whoreson” as the rather euphemistic “o filho da barregã” (the mistress/concubine’s son). This is quite a strong expression in itself, but its association with the medieval period distances the charge somewhat. Rocha Afonso’s 1998 dramaturgical adaptation changes this to “malandro”, which is something closer to a scoundrel or a scallywag and contains no sexual insult.¹⁹ Álvaro Cunhal’s recently reissued 1960’s translation translates the line as “devem reconhecer-se os filhos do prazer” (the children of pleasure should be acknowledged).²⁰ This rendition loses much of the sexual force of the original, and Cunhal’s translation is generally more prudish in sexual matters, yet it does have a satisfying parabolic quality to it. In fact, it makes a lot of sense for a translation that aims to bring the text to a wider, popular audience. Another instance of this comes when Edmund persuades Edgar

¹⁹ Ricardo Alberty, *Rei Lear, Macbeth*, (Lisboa & São Paulo: Verbo, 1973), p. 24. Ricardo Alberty/Maria João da Rocha Afonso, *Rei Lear*, unpublished translation used for TNDM production of the play in 1998, p. 4 Rocha Afonso also changes Alberty’s notion of Gloucester’s infidelity as a “pecadilho da juventude”(peccadillo of youth) to the more censorious “pecado” (sin). Yet she transforms the unwieldy “a mãe era uma formosura; foi para mim muito agradável o tempo em que o gerei”(yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making) into “a mãe era uma formosura; deu-me muito gozo gerá-lo”(his mother was beautiful; I enjoyed making him).

²⁰ Álvaro Cunhal, *O Rei Lear*, (Lisboa: Caminho, 2002, 3rd. ed.), p. 24.

he is in danger, and he introduces the phrase “quem te avisa teu amigo é” (he who gives you warning, shows he is your friend), a popular saying that is still in use today.²¹

Cunhal’s translation is greatly concerned with the consequences of Lear’s reign in terms of poverty and there is an obvious empathy with the poor and the lower classes throughout the translation. In a note on the killing of Cornwall by one of his servants, for instance, Cunhal draws the attention of the reader to “the moral superiority of the servants in comparison with the perversity of their noble masters. The higher moral stance of the “lower” classes appears consistently throughout *King Lear*”.²² This perspective means that although Cunhal stresses the consequences of sexual injustice in the demonisation of Edmund, his greater concern with social injustice leads him to give priority in terms of word choice and literary impact to the role of Edgar, especially when he is disguised as Poor Tom. This means that the moral structure of the Shakespearean text is reproduced in the translation and Cunhal is able to emphasise social injustice without aligning himself with the evil forces in the play. Nevertheless, it also leads to a certain unease in the translation of the role of Edmund. Several of the notes at the back of the translation, for instance, seek to comment on and explain Edmund’s words in moral terms rather than in terms of vocabulary. Right at the beginning of the play, for instance, when Gloucester is discussing Edmund’s mother, Cunhal introduces a note which reads:

A commentator has already noted the impropriety of such a conversation about Edmund’s mother in his presence. It has been suggested that although Edmund is onstage, he does not hear this conversation.²³

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 41

²² “Notar a elevação moral dos servidores em contraste com a perversidade dos seus nobres amos. A superior posição moral das classes “inferiores” aparece insistentemente em *O Rei Lear*”. *Ibid*, p. 248.

²³ “Já um comentador notou a impropriedade de tal conversa sobre a mãe de Edmundo na presença deste. Alguns pretendem que Edmundo, embora em cena, “não ouve” a conversa”. *Ibid*, p. 203.

In Act V Scene I, when Edmund says to Albany “Sir, you speak nobly” (V, I, 28), Cunhal introduces what seems to be an unnecessary note after his translation that “Edmund is speaking ironically”. Similarly, in a note following his translation of Albany’s plea to “save him, save him” (V, III, 153), after Edmund has been defeated by Edgar, Cunhal explains:

Albany does not want to save Edmund, he only wants him to live long enough in order to be able to incriminate himself and Goneril; “Only to obtain his confession and to be able to accuse him openly of what is in the letter” (Johnson).²⁴

The play’s emphasis on letters takes on particular relevance in a translation written during the time of the dictatorship when various types of written material were subject to censorship. For instance, Edmund describes the contents of Edgar’s letter as “censurável”, which although primarily a moral epithet, would also have referred his readership to the regime’s extensive censorship of any material it disliked.²⁵ The same letter refers to “the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered”, which Cunhal translates as “a opressão duma velhice tirânica que governa, não porque tenha poder, mas porque é suportada”.²⁶ This makes the phrase more widely applicable not only to generational conflict, but also the specific conflict of those fighting the governing Salazar dictatorship. Cunhal’s awareness of what it means to open someone else’s letter also leads to an interesting delicacy concerning Edgar’s opening of the letter Oswald has been carrying from Goneril. The Shakespearean text already has Edgar justify the opening of the letter with the words “Leave, gentle wax; and manners, blame us not:/To know our enemies’ minds, we’d rip their hearts;/Their

²⁴ “Albânia não deseja salvar Edmundo mas apenas que ele viva o bastante para poder apurar as suas culpas e as de Goneril; “Somente para obter a sua confissão e poder acusá-lo abertamente pela sua carta”(Johnson)”. *Ibid*, p. 265.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 36.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 37.

papers is more lawful” (IV, VI, 265-268). Cunhal translates “manners, blame us not” as “A moral não nos pode censurar”, which justifies Edgar opening the letter by contrasting the pseudo-morality of the dictatorship with the morality of its opponents. However, a certain discomfort appears to remain, for Cunhal also adds a note relating to “leave, gentle wax”, which explains to the reader that this phrase is “an expression of delicacy when opening a letter”.

Alberty’s translation also seems to find Edmund’s textual discontinuity disconcerting, and in his explanation of Edmund’s ‘conversion’, Alberty betrays a moralising intent. After the line “Edmund was beloved,” he introduces a note at the end of the text:

Shakespeare is expert at recognising the point of view of each character and here clarifies Edmund’s (partly subconscious, as we would say today) motivation. This has to do with the fact that he has not been, or does not feel himself to have been loved (according to Kenneth Muir’s interpretation, with which we are in complete agreement.) Note how immediately after this, Edmund wants to do some good.²⁷

Indeed, in Margarida Pratas’s 1984 translation, this moralising intent becomes part of Edmund’s speech. Translating “Tis past and so am I”, Pratas has “Já passou e eu também *mudei*” (It is in the past and I too *have changed*)²⁸

²⁷ “Shakespeare, perito em reconhecer o ponto de vista de cada personagem, completa nesta frase o esclarecimento da motivação – em parte subconsciente, diríamos hoje – de Edmundo; o facto de ele não ser, ou não se sentir amado (segundo a interpretação de Kenneth Muir que partilhamos inteiramente). Nota-se como, logo a seguir, Edmundo quer praticar uma boa acção”. Ricardo Alberty, (1973), *Op. Cit.*, p.320 note 72.

²⁸ Margarida Pratas, *Rei Lear*, (Mem Martins: Europa-America, 1984), p.148.

III. I. The 1980's in Portugal and the Rise of the Theatrical Freelancer

To analyse the performance of Diogo Infante as Edmund in the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II production of *Rei Lear*, it is first necessary to explore the cultural conditions in which Infante came to prominence. In the introductory chapter to the thesis, I have suggested that the 1980's were a decade of transition from the socially and politically inspired theatre of the 1970's to the socially marginalised, but more widely subsidised theatre of the 1990's. As well as ushering in important technological developments like the introduction of colour television broadcasting and the availability of VCR, the 1980's also reshaped the relationship between culture and politics in ways that were foundational for the 1990's. As Eduarda Dionísio has argued, the 1980's were characterised by:

(...) (a) growing distrust of the “social,” the ideological, the collective (and also of passion), but an increasing “natural” confidence in institutions, the market and the individual. There is an increasing preference for the language of space and the body over those of time and the word as well as a greater acceptance of reality “as it is”.²⁹

As the quote indicates, wider political tendencies played a large part in shaping these developments. In the second half of the decade in particular, Prime Minister Cavaco Silva and his Secretaries of State for Culture, Teresa Gouveia and later Pedro Santana Lopes, advocated the end of ideology in the arts and promoted a public profile of a culture that was national rather than political in orientation. As part of this process, some theatre groups were absorbed into a dominant culture which combined elements

²⁹ “vai-se desenvolvendo a desconfiança em relação ao “social”, à ideologia, ao colectivo (e também à paixão), a confiança “natural” nas instituições, no mercado e no indivíduo, a preferência pelas linguagens do corpo e do espaço em detrimento das da palavra e do tempo, a aceitação da realidade-como-é”. Eduarda Dionísio, *Títulos, Acções, Obrigações: Sobre a Cultura em Portugal 1974-1994*, (Lisboa: Salamandra, 1993), p. 346.

of elite and mass culture, but which completely bypassed the popular culture that had informed the cultural politics of the first half of the decade. The Government also attempted to encourage more business investment in the arts and reduce subsidies from the state by introducing the ultimately ineffectual Lei do Mecenato in 1986. These processes of centralisation and state disinvestment had had clear consequences by the end of the decade. By 1987, theatre companies could only apply for a state subsidy if they had a minimum of 150 seats (80 outside Lisbon). In 1988, 14 companies lost their subsidies. In the same year, there were only 30 permanent groups operating outside the national theatres. Fourteen of these were in Lisbon, two in outer Lisbon, five in Porto and nine in the rest of the country.

A new theatrical generation was defining itself in these changed circumstances. The dramatist Luis Assis has written cogently of how this generation inherited the disillusionment of those who had been part of the previous revolutionary movement but also had to define itself against that generation's continuing "stigma" that all art had to be political. In contrast to the apparent homogeneity of the previous generation, Assis asserts that his generation "(...) is not easily defined. It is a fragmented generation, a generation of individualists, with few references, a generation in search of values that were not there when they needed them. A generation like this can't be spoken of as such, because we have very little in common".³⁰

A crucial figure to emerge as part of this generation was the theatrical freelancer. The freelancer represented a substantial break with the collectively-oriented practice of the late 1970's and early 1980's or the carefully-controlled hierarchies of the national

³⁰ "Mas a verdade é que a geração a que pertença não é facilmente definível. É uma geração dispersa, uma geração de individualistas, sem muitas referências, uma geração em busca de valores que não estavam lá quando foram precisos. Um a geração como esta não permite que se fale em seu nome, porque é muito pouco o que temos em comum". Luis Assis "Gerações..." in *Teatro Escritos 2: Está Tudo Bem Com o Teatro em Portugal?*, (Lisboa: IPAE & Cotovia, 1999), p. 43. The notion of a "stigma" which was passed on to this theatrical generation comes from Assis.

theatres. They were a product of the difficult economic circumstances that characterised the second half of the 1980's, where mobility and flexibility were keys to economic survival in an increasingly precarious cultural market. They also defined themselves in opposition to the previous generation of independent theatre practitioners whom they claimed often blocked their work. There may, however, be more continuity than discontinuity in this apparent rupture, as both of these theatrical generations shared a common desire for independence and autonomy. The very different economic and political circumstances of the 1970's as compared to the second half of the 1980's meant that the ways in which such independence was defined differed substantially from one generation to the next.

The freelancers of this period were characterised not only by their movement between different theatrical companies and projects, but also between different media. Assis himself claims to have been more influenced in his writing by television and cinema than by theatre and the kind of work the freelancers sought to do was very much influenced by these media forms. It tended to have a strong visual component and often appealed to a mass audience rather than those who more routinely attended theatre. From the burgeoning advertising industry came an emphasis on the seductive powers of the body. However, despite being popular figures with audiences, theatrical freelancers were often regarded with suspicion by other theatre practitioners who saw them as not having served an appropriate theatrical apprenticeship before becoming well-known. Even among the more diverse theatre companies that began to form at the end of the 1980's, the freelancer attracted a considerable degree of hostility. The writer/performer Lúcia Sigalho, for instance, has commented "I detest the freelancer, I'm from the old

school, that of the '60's. I want a company, a space, a structure. I want things to be as they should be".³¹

The transformations provoked by the freelance generation were most obvious in two areas. Within the theatrical world, their emergence coincided with a privileging of the visual, the physical and the technological over the verbal and the textual in 1980's theatrical work. In a sense, such a focus was a result of the very changes that had also led to the emergence of the freelancer, such as increased competition with other media. Yet the figure of the freelancer also contributed to such developments. As outsiders within established theatrical structures, they had less of an investment in traditional text-based theatre and were often more willing to challenge its centrality. Within the wider cultural sphere, debates that took place in the late 1990's around the relationship between theatre and new media forms like television often centred upon the theatrical freelancer. These debates took place throughout the 1990's, but it was the developments of the 1980's that laid the basis for transformations in the nature of the debate. Near the beginning of the decade, for instance, the First Congress of Portuguese Theatre in 1993 was concerned primarily with the lack of drama shown on television. By the late 1990's, however, it was the consequences of the increased number of theatre actors moving into television that had become the main debate. By 2002, when the actor António Durães came to speak to university students at the Universidade do Minho, it was the question of whether theatre actors should work in the medium of television that most interested students during the discussion. To a great extent, this was a media-manufactured debate at a crucial time for Portuguese television. The height of discussion about whether theatre actors should work in television coincided with the appearance of several Portuguese-made *telenovelas*, the soaps that are the staple diet of

³¹ "Detesto o *free-lancer*, sou à moda antiga, à anos 60: Quero uma companhia, um espaço, uma estrutura, coisas como deve ser". Quoted by Vera Borges, *Todos ao Palco: Estudos Sociológicos sobre o Teatro em Portugal*, (Oeiras: Celta, 2001), p. 26 note 8.

prime time television in Portugal. The debate centred upon the ‘quality’ of these new Portuguese products in relation to the well-established Brazilian soaps that had previously dominated television viewing. As such, it sought to earmark a particular territory for Portuguese *telenovelas* in relation to their Brazilian competitors.

The media debate gave rise to statements from high-profile actors and actresses about whether they would consider working in the new soaps and what they thought of them. Many theatre actors reaffirmed their commitment to working only in the theatre and deplored the need for actors to act in bad-quality soaps. António Durães admitted he had no respect for the bad scripts of Portuguese *telenovelas* and noted in them a tendency to “democratise” down to a lowest common denominator so that both good and bad actors looked bad.³² In this respect, he argued, at least in Brazilian soaps, it was easier to distinguish the good actors from the bad non-actors. In interview, the actress São José Lapa also talked about being left fragile by her experience of acting in the Portuguese soap *Humor de Perdição*:

While television continues with this “arrangement” (...) by which actors lend their bodies and artistic abilities to a disgusting and stupefying humour, I refuse to do it. I’m not going to give my skills and my name for others to get rich at my expense.³³

However, Lapa did go on to act in the television soaps *A Banqueira do Povo* and *Médico de Família* and has appeared in other soaps since then.

Much criticism of television work centred upon its reliance on stereotype. Theatre director and critic Fernando Mora Ramos voices a common critique of television acting styles from theatre practitioners:

³² These comments were made in a talk to Universidade do Minho students in 2002.

³³ “Enquanto a televisão estiver com este caldinho (...) em que os actores emprestam o seu corpo e capacidades artísticas a um humor nojento e estupidificante, recuso-me a fazer. Não vou dar minha capacidade e o meu nome para que outros enriqueçam à minha conta”. Quoted by Vera Borges, (2001), *Op. Cit.* p. 123.

The “knack” has returned in force, for to be an actor in the aforementioned territory (television), *whose boundaries with the territory of theatre are very fluid*, all that’s needed are three character postures and the ability to play a human archetype which is necessary to the current soap: the bad guy, the good guy, the so-so guy, the sinner, the poor thing, the whore, the ambitious one, the rich one, the loony aunt, the independent one, etc. (my emphasis).³⁴

Similarly, in an interview published in the *Jornal de Letras*, actresses Fernanda Lapa and Carla Bolito pointed out that television’s reliance on stereotype made television work particularly problematic for women. Firstly, they argued that it was not as easy for women to get television work as it was for men. Secondly, as Bolito pointed out, the roles for women were extremely limiting. She claimed “(t)he roles are written for models and they are either for maids or dunces”.³⁵ Lapa agreed with Bolito but acknowledged that the financial incentives for working in television were tempting to many actors. She noted that “(t)he stereotypes are all there. It’s like that. But it offers a lot of money. But then it’s a job for slaves and it’s desperate, because they have to speak impossible texts. Yet it does provide security”.³⁶

Some theatre actors, however, argued that television work could be beneficial. Many of them came to prominence in the 1980’s and embarked almost simultaneously on careers in both theatre and television. They stressed the fact that the financial incentive of television work was a strong one and that the quality of the Portuguese soaps had increased tremendously in the last few years. Some even argued that it helped

³⁴ “O “jeitinho” regressou em força, pois para ser actor no território referido, com fronteiras muito diluídas relativamente ao território teatral, bastam três palmos de figura e um ar de poder cumprir um arquétipo humano necessário à novela em curso, o mau, o bom, o assim-assim, o pecador, o coitadinho, a pega, a ambiciosa, a rica, a tia tola, a independente, etc”. Fernando Mora Ramos, “Editorial” in *Teatro Escritos 2: Está Tudo Bem Com o Teatro em Portugal ?*, (Lisboa: IPAE & Cotovia, 1999), p. 8.

³⁵ “São sobretudo feitos por modelos e os papeis ou são de empregadas domésticas ou de dondocas”. Quoted in an interview conducted with both actresses by Maria Leonor Nunes & Susana Martins entitled “Mulheres do Teatro” in *Jornal de Letras*, (20/3/2002), p.8.

³⁶ “Estão lá os estereótipos todos.É assim. Mas dá dinheiro e bastante. Mas é um trabalho de escravatura e desesperante, porque têm que dizer textos impossíveis. Só que é uma segurança de trabalho”. *Ibidem*.

expand their acting techniques. The actress Sylvie Rocha, for example, had been part of the first generation to go into television from theatre and considered her television work a complement to her theatrical work with the *Artistas Unidos* company. She recognised that although there had been difficulties:

(...) that brought good things too, which you see once some time has passed. I find it very easy to get by in interpreting a text, memorising a text, improvising situations and putting myself onstage. These are things that are very easy for me in soaps. There are others which I find more difficult, like finding the right tone, and you must remember that the camera is small. Technically, I had more difficulties.³⁷

I would suggest that what was at issue in this media debate, whatever side was taken, was not so much the ‘quality’ or otherwise of Portuguese television. Instead, it represented a high point in the territorial battle for audiences between theatre and television, with theatre very much on the defensive. This battle was phrased in terms of the specificity of theatre, as a way of emphasising its superiority over television. However, as Mora Ramos acknowledges, this elevation of specificity was taking place in a context where the boundaries between theatre and television were becoming increasingly fluid.

III. II. The Chameleon Path of Diogo Infante

Diogo Infante is one of Portugal’s best known younger actors and a high-profile example of the type of freelancer that the 1980’s created and the 1990’s endorsed. Born in Lisbon in 1967, he has worked as a stage actor in a variety of productions which

³⁷“(…) Mas isto trouxe coisas boas, que se vão vendo com o tempo; tenho uma grande capacidade para me safar na interpretação de um texto, decorar um texto, situações de improviso, capacidade de me pôr em cena, há coisas em que eu tenho bastante facilidade na novela. Outras em que tenho mais dificuldade, como encontrar o tom certo, é preciso ter a noção de que a câmara é pequena, a nível técnico tive mais dificuldade”. Quoted by Vera Borges, (2001), *Op. Cit.* p.74.

include Shakespeare (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Lear*) as well as contemporary works by Pinter (*The Lover*), Tennessee Williams (*The Glass Menagerie*) and Eric Bogosian (*Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll*). He also performed in the opera *White Crow*, directed by Bob Wilson with music by Philip Glass. He is particularly well-known for his television and cinema work. He presented the prime time television quiz show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* and recently appeared in a film of the book *A Jangada de Pedra* (*The Stone Raft*) by the Portuguese Nobel Prize for Literature, José Saramago. He is also much in demand to provide voiceovers for television adverts, most notably a series of advertisements for Portugal Telecom.

Infante's attitude to his television work is pragmatic. Whilst recognising that "(t)elevisão has a devastating rhythm, and leaves us little room for manoeuvre to explore our creative side", as well as having a tendency "to label us with an image", he believes that the ability to reach large audiences compensates for this.³⁸ Moreover, he argues that although actors in soaps work in a product that is "neither Shakespeare nor Molière", there are nevertheless good quality television products and the fact that television reaches a wider audience can also be beneficial to the theatre:

It's easy to attack television for its generalist, mass-oriented nature. But there's another way of looking at it, which is as a power that is dangerous, but one that, if it is well-directed, can bring us many rewards. I think that I've known how to capitalise on the rewards of television to the benefit of theatre. I think that the fact that we're more well-known because of television is good for the theatre. Because it attracts larger audiences.³⁹

³⁸ "E a televisão tem um ritmo avassalador, deixando-nos pouca margem de manobra para podermos explorar o nosso lado criativo". Interview with Maria Leonor Nunes, "O Actor e Seus Duplos" in *Jornal de Letras*, (28/11/2001), p. 9.

³⁹ "É fácil atacar a televisão pelo seu carácter generalista e massificador. Mas há outra forma de a olhar, como um poder que é perigosa mas, se for bem orientado, pode-nos trazer muitos frutos. Eu julgo que tenho sabido capitalizar essa mais-valia televisiva em prol do teatro. Acredito que o facto de sermos mais conhecidos por causa da televisão, é bom para o teatro. Porque atrai mais público". *Ibid*, p. 10.

Infante has been openly critical of what he sees as short-sighted government attitudes towards the funding of theatre. He deplores the fact that those who do not belong to fixed theatre companies are less likely to receive government funding even if, as in Infante's case, they have proved they can attract large audiences. Even when they do receive funding, Infante claims that the amounts of money can often be "derisory" and the product of arbitrary decision-making processes.

Although private funding has on several occasions come to Infante's rescue, he is not naive about the implications of this. Recognising that more experimental material is less likely to be funded, Infante claims it is vital that proper structures of public funding exist or "soon all of us will be doing comedies so we have the money to put on the shows and the audiences".⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Infante is also scathing about those who consider that when a theatrical product is commercial or popular with audiences, then this means that the play has less quality. This is a notion he sees as patronising the public.

Infante is a keen advocate of cinema. In interview, he talked of wanting to do more cinema because "the best of us can be captured in that film. There's a certain idea of immortality in that. It's there in the can and that unique moment will be kept for ever".⁴¹ Nevertheless, Infante has also talked extensively about his pleasure in stage work. Film and television do not allow actors time to perfect, reflect and invent, because the pace is so quick. Returning to the stage is, therefore, a way of renewing a sense of challenge, difficulty and adventure. Yet despite his recognition of the specific pleasures of theatre work, Infante reaffirms, above all, his commitment to a rather chameleon-like path:

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ "Porque o melhor de nós pode ficar captado, naquela película. Há nisso uma certa ideia de imortalidade. Fica guardado na lata e poderá ser um momento único, para sempre". *Ibid*, p. 12

Although one of the criticisms made of me and my generation is the fact that I multiply myself by doing many things, it's that variety that satisfies me. I don't want to be a specialised actor.⁴²

A facet of Infante's multiplicity that has been discussed less often is the way in which his sexual appeal has been commodified as part of his performance style. This commodification is marketed to appeal mainly to heterosexual women and, less overtly, to gay men. This is suggested in an interview with Infante printed in the society magazine *VIP* around the time of the production of *Lear*. The title of the article is "The Feminine Universe Fascinates Me" and has a full-page colour photo of Infante sitting in a very luxurious pink padded chair, dressed casually, next to another picture of him in his costume for Edmund, which consists of a white shirt and black leather trousers (see photograph no. 12 at the end of the chapter). The title indicates a privileged connection with femininity which he alludes to explicitly later in the interview. At the time, Infante was preparing to direct and star in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* as well as performing in *Lear*. In relation to the former, Infante confessed:

This is not the first time I have made an incursion into the feminine world which, moreover, is a world that seduces me because of its mystery and because it is more distant from me. Feminine characters are extremely rich and complex. It is a world that fascinates me and about which I have many doubts.⁴³

⁴² "Embora uma das críticas que me fazem, e também á minha geração, seja o facto de me multiplicar por muitas coisas, é nessa variedade que me satisfaço. Não quero ser um actor especializado". *Ibid*, p.10

⁴³ "Não é a primeira vez que faço uma incursão pelo universo feminino que, aliás, é um mundo que me seduz, pelo seu lado mais misterioso, por ser uma coisa que me é mais distante. As personagens femininas são extremamente ricas e complexas. É um universo que me fascina e sobre o qual tenho muitas dúvidas". Interview with Diogo Infante, "O Universo Feminino Fascina-me" in *VIP*, 18-24 February 1998. The focus on the feminine here is, of course, also a strategy to appeal to *VIP*'s predominantly female readership.

Such intriguing comments have helped to sell Infante to a female audience. His image is constructed upon the basis of an understanding of women and their emotions, which is, nevertheless, a highly sexualised image too. Women are transformed into sexual subjects who are encouraged to desire Infante as a glamorous male sexual object who also understands the way women feel. The ways in which Infante is also marketed to homosexual men are less tangible because less overt, but this appeal is very much part of his image too. The soft, pink material of the chair in the picture in the first picture, the privileged connection with femininity which echoes Williams's own, the leather clothing and the strategically-placed sword in the second picture, these all have a resonance for male homosexuals who are also encouraged, covertly, to view Infante as an object of sexual desire.

III. III. "Men Are As The Time Is": Diogo Infante as Edmund in the TNDM *Rei Lear* (1998)

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the TNDM production of *Rei Lear* took place at a time of crisis for the resident company. The very notion of a permanent company was being taken apart gradually with a view to dismantling it altogether. This meant that the already permeable boundary between company members and actors from outside the company was also becoming fluid in the opposite direction, as company members were forced to think more like freelancers and look to work outside the Teatro Nacional. Indeed, well-known company actors like Ruy de Carvalho and António Rama, who played Lear and Gloucester respectively in this production, had already made the move into television long before this crisis.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Ruy de Carvalho was, in fact, an actor in the first Portuguese soap, *Esperança*, made in 1962 and has acted in several of them since then. Indeed, many members of the public may well know him primarily through his television work.

Diogo Infante had already performed the role of Edmund in the Teatro Experimental de Cascais production of the play in 1991, directed by Carlos Avilez.⁴⁵ The objective behind bringing Infante into this production was clearly to attract a wider, younger audience to the TNDM who would be familiar with his cinema and television work. Thus, in a time of financial crisis for the TNDM, Infante's media visibility and his previous experience in the role acted as a guarantee of the financial success of the venture. To this extent, the quality of his performance was less important than the fact that he was *recognisable* to those who had come to see Infante 'in the flesh' and compare him with his small screen persona.

Consequently, much was done to frame Infante's performance for public consumption. The role of Edmund actually facilitates such episodic framing in that his appearances in the play are relatively brief. Furthermore, Edmund's soliloquies enable a privileged relationship with the audience, which was accentuated in the TNDM production through use of costume and spotlighting. In the set-piece fight between Edgar and Edmund in the final act, Infante was dressed in a sexually alluring way. He wore black leather trousers, a white shirt and a black leather waistcoat which he unbuttoned before the fight. The choreography of the fight gave him the eroticism of a model or a dancer, with the slow pace of the fight enabling audience concentration on Infante to an even greater extent. Similarly, in an unbearably drawn-out death scene, he was positioned on the stage close to the audience. His final speeches monopolised the audience's attention to such an extent that he almost upstaged Lear's subsequent entrance with the dead Cordelia in his arms. This prolonged focus on Infante became almost farcical. At times he seemed to speak his lines to the floor as he once more raised himself up from the ground onto his elbow to deliver another line. When he spoke of

⁴⁵ In the *VIP* interview quoted earlier, Infante spoke of how Avilez had stressed the mundane, aesthetic, brutal aspects of the play, whilst Richard Cottrell concentrated more on the delivery of the text and the work of the actors.

having been loved by both sisters, he laughed before delivering the line and the audience laughed after it. Undeniably, the line is comical for modern audiences. Yet part of the comedy also resulted from Infante's obvious exploitation of these last few minutes of his stage life.

It is interesting, in this respect, that it was these final moments of his role that were emphasised in the production. His soliloquies and scenes with Gloucester and Edgar were performed competently, but with little sense of menace or conviction. His scenes with Regan and Goneril included some stock moves of passion, such as lifting Goneril up and kissing her or coming up behind Regan to embrace her, but these were executed rather mechanically. The advantage of focusing upon Edmund's end was not only that it enacted a cliché where the evil character repents at the last minute, a cliché that would have been recognisable from television soaps, but also that it is a moment of *passivity* in the role of Edmund. Infante's costumed body thus became available as an object of consumption in a way that audiences are used to from television, cinema and advertising. Yet this created an intriguing contradiction, for such representations of masculinity make the masculine body a passive object for spectatorship in a way that is closer to conventional representations of *femininity*. As such, the process of active spectatorship of the commodified male body queered the traditional relationship between female actor and male audience as the male actor was reduced to commodified object and the female spectator recast as active consumer of that commodification.

Yet the moment where Infante draws out his death for just one moment too long and risks upstaging the entrance of Carvalho was telling from another point of view as well. Two very different actors with very different experiences for one moment crossed paths with each other onstage. Carvalho had made his career as an actor in repertory and commercial theatre before joining the TNDM company. He worked in cinema and

television, even opera, and is well-known in the media, but made a primary commitment to national theatre company work. Infante, on the other hand, was the freelancer who disrupted notions of conventional company hierarchy and theatrical apprenticeship by making his career between theatre, television, film and advertising and by rising to stardom in the very media-friendly world of television. In a curious way, then, Infante's role in the production as the outsider within a conventional theatrical structure paralleled his dramatic role in the play as the bastard outsider who seeks to make his way "if not by birth...by wit" (I, II, 181). In this particular context, the momentary crossing of paths turned out in Carvalho's favour, for this production was seen very much as his production and the TNDM was very much his setting. Even as an outsider, Infante could not but be aware that there were certain performance rules in the TNDM that could not be transgressed, especially in scenes that involved actors who had spent many years in the company. Yet judging by the plethora of film and television stars, not to mention models, who have been acting in theatre productions recently, it may well be those like Infante who become the next generation of theatre stars.

IV. Theatrical Performance on Film: Kristian Levring's *The King is Alive* (2000)

Since Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* (1996), there has been much critical discussion as to whether Shakespeare on film has stolen the thunder from theatrical productions of the plays. The innovation and popularity of some recent Shakespeare film productions has been contrasted favourably with unadventurous and unimaginative productions of Shakespeare in some theatres. Even the Shakespearean scholar Jonathan Bate has suggested that the more exciting recent developments in performing

Shakespeare have come in film rather than theatre. This section aims to intervene in this debate not through asserting the relative merits of film and theatre Shakespeare, but through an analysis of a film which was based loosely on a Shakespearean play and that explicitly foregrounded rehearsals for a performance of that play as part of the film's narrative structure. In the process, it illustrates ways in which cinema and theatre have formulated similar responses to questions common to both such as, for example, the relationship between innovation and artistic tradition or the democratic potential of new technologies.

On March 13th, 1995, Danish film-makers Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg launched a manifesto entitled 'The Vow of Chastity'. This manifesto established a set of rules for the group that became known as the Dogme (Dogma) film-makers:

Shooting must be done on location; the sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa; the camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted; the film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable; Optical work and filters are forbidden; the film must not contain superficial action; temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden; genre movies are not acceptable; and the film format must be Academy 35mm.⁴⁶

The purpose of the manifesto was twofold. On one level, it was a critique of current films' excessive reliance on technology in creating "the film of illusion". It was simultaneously an attempt to refocus attention on film basics such as the work of actors in the construction of character. To this end, the Vow of Chastity director regarded it as his/her "supreme goal" "to force the truth out of my characters and settings".⁴⁷

In an article on the history of film manifestos, Scott Mackenzie identifies two main differences from previous film manifestos in the Dogme 'Vow of Chastity'. Firstly, unlike earlier manifestos such as those of the 60's *nouvelle vague*, the Dogme

⁴⁶ From 'The Vow of Chastity' at http://www.dogme95.dk/the_vow/vow.html, p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

manifesto seemed less concerned with ideology and more concerned with form. He quotes John Roberts, who argues that the significance of the ‘Vow of Chastity,’ which he labels “a kind of low-key D-I-Y guide for aspirant amateurs”, lies in “its largely technical or formal character”.⁴⁸ Yet the way both Mackenzie and Roberts highlight Dogme’s concentration on form over content ignores the extent to which cinematic form itself had come to have increasingly ideological implications in the 1990’s. The technology for making films had never been more available for anyone to use, yet filmmaking remained concentrated in fewer hands and on a very limited number of themes and *genres*. The Dogme project, like other independent film projects, was one that sought to use the possibilities of new technology in ways that ensured its democratic implications were realised. As the Manifesto itself proclaimed “(t)oday a technological storm is raging, the result of which will be the ultimate democratization of the cinema”.⁴⁹

The second difference that Mackenzie identifies in the Dogme manifesto, despite the messianic feel of the language, is the presence of irony, a quality “that is typically missing in the modernist manifesto”.⁵⁰ The rules established in the Vow of Chastity, with their emphasis on what is forbidden and what must not be done are undermined by a sense of playfulness which mocks the filmmakers’ lofty intentions. Thus, although the Vow of Chastity represented a serious challenge to film-makers to see whether working within a set of rules could increase their creativity, there was also recognition that if the primary objective of truthfulness demanded it, these rules should be transgressed.

Mackenzie does not, however, explore the debt of the Dogme Manifesto to artistic movements in other forms such as theatre. Jerzy Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor*

⁴⁸ John Roberts, “Dogme ‘95” in *New Left Review*, 238 (1999), p.142. Quoted by Scott Mackenzie, “Direct Dogma: Film Manifestos and the *Fin de Siècle*” at http://imv.au.dk/publikationer/pov/Issue_10/section_4/artc6A.html, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Dogme 95 Manifesto at http://www.dogme95.dk/the_vow/index.html.unpaginated.

⁵⁰ Scott Mackenzie, *Op. Cit.* p.3.

Theatre, for example, set out to define what was distinctive about theatre, but his advocacy of a stripping down of the theatrical experience to its core is echoed in the Dogme stress on cinematic truthfulness, just as his critique of “rich” theatre resurfaces in the Dogme critique of “the film of illusion”. Grotowski’s ‘via negativa,’ where the actor eradicates learnt blocks “by a complete stripping down, by the laying bare of one’s own intimacy”, his elimination of non-essentials such as make-up, costume, lighting and sound effects and his notion that rules could liberate rather than constrict also have much in common with Dogme objectives in film.⁵¹

Kristian Levring’s *The King is Alive*, (2000) was the fourth Dogme film to be made. It follows the fortunes of a group of white European and American tourists who are stranded in the Namibian desert after their bus breaks down. In order to keep the group together and to keep their minds off the predicament, they begin rehearsals of *King Lear*. These rehearsals become central to the narrative of the film. The increasing desperation of the travellers brings out a series of personal conflicts which are reflected in the rehearsals and lead to the death of one of the tourists and, potentially, to the deaths of the whole group. In the film, the Dogme rules seemed stretched almost to breaking point. Firstly, *The King is Alive* is a self-consciously epic narrative, taking place in the vast expanse of the Namibian desert. In such a context, it might be difficult to focus on the individual work of the actors, but in reality the setting functions as something like an ‘empty space’ on an immense scale. The film’s combined concentration on the microcosmos of the characters’ relationships within the macrocosmic immensity of the desert is absolutely engrossing. Moreover, the sense of claustrophobia created in the wide open space of the desert, is, as has been pointed out,

⁵¹ Jerzy Grotowski, extract from *Towards a Poor Theatre* printed in Lizbeth Goodman with Jane de Gay (eds.), *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), pp.21-27.

“quite harrowing for an audience used to being a passive observer”.⁵² Such a deliberate provocation in its audience of a profound sense of unease is rare within cinema, but has been actively sought in various theatrical projects which aim to make the spectator a less passive presence.

Critical discussion of the film centred on its ‘faithfulness’ to two texts; the ‘Vow of Chastity’ and the Shakespearean text of *King Lear*. Yet this ignored the fact that it was also located within a specific *performance* tradition of Shakespeare on film and this tradition’s symbiotic relationship with Shakespearean stage performance. Therefore, films of *Lear* by Peter Brook (1971, based on his 1962 stage production) or the Russian Grigori Kozintsev (1970) can be seen as influences on the film which are as important as the ‘Vow of Chastity’ or the Shakespearean text(s) of *Lear*. Indeed, the combination of a minute focus on relationships between the characters within an open setting is particularly redolent of Brook’s interpretation of the play. *The King is Alive* highlighted this connection with theatrical performance through the formal inclusion of rehearsals of the play within the structure of the film. This was reinforced by the use of digital video to make the film, a form of technology which is often said to give film a rather theatrical quality.

The narrative of the film created parallels with the text, through common themes such as futility and despair, but also introduced innovations. A.M. Hennessey has written, for instance, that the film is “surely not *King Lear*, but rather a completely new story that samples from Shakespeare in order to embellish upon the sense of tragedy which is already innate to its own production”.⁵³ The representation of Edmund in the film echoed this dynamic configuration of tradition and innovation. The film did not

⁵² Chris Parry, “Grains of Sand and Grains of Film” in *If Magazine*, at <http://www.ifmagazine.com/common/article.asp?articleID=1122>, p.2.

⁵³ A.M. Hennessey, “Dogme Rules and *The King is Alive*” at <http://www.subjectivia.com/king.txt>, p.1.

posit direct correspondences between Shakespearean textual characters and characters in the film, except in the scenes centred on rehearsals for the play. Instead, it distributed elements of the characteristics found in particular dramatic roles among different characters in the film. The French tourist Catherine (Romane Bohringer), for example, is initially asked to play the role of Cordelia in their performances. Yet she refuses to have anything to do with the production. The way in which she tricks the character who does eventually play the part (Gina, played by Jennifer Jason Leigh), and is probably responsible for poisoning her at the end makes her film character closer to the textual Goneril. There was also a suggestion that the roles the characters played within the rehearsals of the play came to influence their film characters. The main instance of this was with Gina, who after being cast as Cordelia, seemed to take on something of the character's self-sacrifice in her relationship with the others. This was most notable in the tragedy of her death which functioned as a form of catharsis to keep the group together.

Given the dispersal of Shakespearean characteristics among the different characters, it is not surprising that critics identified different characters in the film with Edmund. Hennessey suggested Charles (David Calder) was a character who “possesses a warped variety of the evil qualities that one might imagine in such characters as Shakespeare's Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester”.⁵⁴ However, the age of the character, his credulity and his fall through sexual desire made him closer to the textual Gloucester than Edmund. In the film and in rehearsals of the play, there was one character, Moses (Vusi Kunene) who seemed more closely identified with the textual Edmund, both because of his outsider status and his relationship with the character, Liz, (Janet McTeer) who played Goneril in the rehearsals. Apart from the mystically wise

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

Kanana (Peter Khubeke), Moses, the driver of the bus, was the only black African actor/character in the film. In a central scene, Liz attempted to rouse her husband Ray (Bruce Davison) to jealousy by luring away Moses for a sexual encounter. She makes it clear that the fact that he is black is meant to make the sexual insult to Ray all the more provocative. However, the encounter does not proceed in the way Liz has planned. When they are alone together, Moses tells her to remove her pants and then to turn her back to him. It looks as if this is to lead to some form of sexual activity, but after Liz has gone down on her knees, Moses merely leaves, without a sexual encounter taking place. Nevertheless, another white passenger Paul (Chris Walker) later hurls racist insults at Moses because of what he supposes to have happened with Liz. Despite Moses' denial, Paul attacks him physically and Moses is saved only by the intervention of Paul's wife Amanda (Lia Williams).

In a later scene, Moses and Liz are rehearsing the scene in *King Lear* where Goneril gives Edmund a kiss as a token of her affection, while lamenting the fact that she has to play the "man" in her marriage. Liz, in full view of her husband and the others, attempts once more to make Ray jealous by asking Moses to repeat the kiss several times. Ray then walks out and Moses goes after him, leaving Liz alone. This is the last scene between them and there is a suggestion of some form of reconciliation between Ray and Liz when Ray returns.

These two scenes show how the themes of the play as shown in the rehearsals dovetail with the narrative of the film. The coding of Edmund as the black Moses drew a heightened parallel between racial and sexual transgression that was explored in both scenes. In the same way that Edmund's fate is partly due to social forces outside himself, Moses was subject to white paranoia about the sexual prowess of black men and their attractiveness to white women in such a way that his actual behaviour mattered

less than the colour of his skin. The geographical closeness of Namibia to racially charged post-apartheid South Africa made the film's location an important factor in this exploration of links between racial and sexual transgression, even within such an apparently empty place as the desert. Yet if clear parallels were drawn between racial and sexual transgression, those between gender and race were more ambiguous. The fact that Moses turned his back on Liz when he realised he was being used can be read as a moment of racial self-affirmation, but it may also be viewed as a patriarchal rejection of the desiring woman, where the sense of male identification between Moses and the husband Ray was paramount. In the scene of the repeated kiss, Moses showed little interest in Liz and her feelings and seemed more concerned with the distraught Ray. However, in a reversal of the priorities of the Shakespearean play, Liz's motivations were made clear. She is frustrated within her marriage and seeks to rekindle Ray's desire by making him jealous. Yet there was nothing that helped explain why Moses acted in the way he did. It could only be assumed that it might be linked to white attitudes towards his blackness and his own desire to assert a difference from the white stereotype of the sexual behaviour of black men.

The film never showed a final performance of the play, and who would they perform to anyway? There were only the rehearsals, which seemed closer to the laborious, repetitive, intense processes of theatrical rehearsal than to the slick final product conventionally associated with film. The camera focused on the rehearsals at length, showing the stops and starts as characters became familiar with the text of the play and the director intervened to guide them. Even the text itself was made into a material performance object, for each part was written out from memory by the director on separate rolls of paper. Paradoxically, therefore, the centrality of these theatrical rehearsals in both narrative and aesthetic terms indicates that the director came closest

to achieving Dogme *cinematic* objectives through a sideways movement into the artistic medium of *theatrical* performance. In this innovative multi-media experiment, there was a dialogue across artistic forms about the democratic potential of the medium to foreground the work of the actors and the locations in which they do their work. Moreover, the interweaving of film, text and theatre performance led to a marked disruption of stable notions of character. This was particularly evident in the unstable configuration of race, gender and sexuality which characterised the figure of Moses/Edmund.

V. “The Spectacle of Shakespeare Rendered Spectacular”: The Fooksbarn Production of *King Lear*

The final section of this chapter examines internal boundaries within theatre itself; in this case between a text-based, literary dramatic tradition and physical, improvisational theatre forms. It focuses upon Fooksbarn Theatre Company’s production of *King Lear*. The play was originally performed in Europe in the early 1980’s and then in England in 1985, but the video I have used for research purposes is of their 1988 production of the play in Sydney.

Fooksbarn Theatre began in Cornwall, England in 1971, but have been based in France for many years. They are a company that has worked abroad extensively, including visits to Portugal and Spain in 1982-3 where they found the audiences “wonderful (...) naive, simple, childlike, willing to go through any experience and take it”.⁵⁵

Their experience of producing Shakespeare for audiences whose first language is not English has prompted a style of theatre with an emphasis on the visual and particularly the physical which has its roots in *commedia dell’arte* and mime

⁵⁵ Geraldine Cousin, “Shakespeare from Scratch: The Fooksbarn *Hamlet* and *King Lear*,” in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 1.1 (Feb), 1985, p. 127.

techniques. This performance style is premised on a view that whereas Shakespearean language may be difficult to understand, visual and physical theatre languages are more universally accessible. It is a view which also suggests that text-based performances of Shakespeare often do not make sufficient use of these other theatrical languages. In an article on the company's work, Geraldine Cousin quotes one of the members of Footsbarn as saying that although they did not want to ignore the importance of verbal language in Shakespeare, they aimed to create a performance style "which substitutes a language and poetry of all the aspects of theatre for a purely verbal one".⁵⁶ In comments on performing *King Lear* in Italy in 1983, the company talked about the importance of working outside England in developing this performance style:

It's been a wonderful training. For example, working on *King Lear* in Italy and France, you realize how much you've relied on the language in the theatre, and how it is so unnecessary, though beautiful. How it's far more important to do things with the body, to feel the whole meaning of the thing in the construction of the scene, to show the audience what is going on just by what the character is doing (...). It made us much more physical, to work out of England.⁵⁷

The performance critic Susan Bennett attributes a wider political significance to such a performance style for Shakespeare. Whilst productions of Shakespeare tend to be classified as 'high' culture, the body has invariably been connected with 'low' or popular culture. The juxtaposition of the two, according to Bennett, enables an alternative focus:

(...) on the *means* of production: how a text might and can be embodied (...) It is not only about what bodies receive permission to represent Shakespeare's text and how, but also about where those

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.116.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.123.

bodies can be visible (...) the spectacle of Shakespeare rendered spectacular.⁵⁸

The extent to which this emphasis on the body renders conventional assumptions about Shakespearean performance problematic can be seen in reviews of Footsbarn's performance of *King Lear* at the London International Mime Festival in 1985. The fact that it was a Festival of Mime mediated any potential disruption to a certain extent, for although mime does not have the theatrical *kudos* of performance within the 'high' cultural context of a national theatre or the West End, over the years it has gained a certain mainstream respectability that other forms of physical theatre do not have. However, reviewers remained unsure about how to respond to Footsbarn's style. Kenneth Rea in *The Guardian* likened them to those early modern performers who first played Shakespeare for European audiences, and noted that the production itself showed how far notions of mime had been stretched in recent years.⁵⁹ Michael Ratcliffe in *The Observer* pointed to the similarities with the work of Ariane Mnouchkine in France, in their use of masks, banners and percussion.⁶⁰ Michael Coveney in *The Financial Times* thought the cast "more notable for mimetic and musicianly skills than for verse speaking",⁶¹ while Giles Gordon in *Punch* described their *King Lear* as "a dramatic equivalent to the Mona Lisa reworked in needle-point".⁶² Gordon also suggested that "this seriously thought-out production seems, in many ways, closer to the heart of the Bard than what we often see at Stratford".⁶³ This indicates how such performances

⁵⁸ Susan Bennett, *Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p.53.

⁵⁹ Review by Kenneth Rea in *The Guardian* (11/1/1985), reproduced in the London Theatre Record 1-15 Jan., p. 22. Subsequent quotations from this newspaper are taken from this review.

⁶⁰ Review by Michael Ratcliffe in *The Observer* (13/1/1985), reproduced in the London Theatre Record 1-15 Jan., p. 22.

⁶¹ Review by Michael Coveney in *The Financial Times* (15/1/1985), reproduced in the London Theatre Record 1-15 Jan., pp. 22, 27.

⁶² Review by Giles Gordon in *Punch* (23/1/1985), reproduced in the London Theatre Record 1-15 Jan., p.27.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

question the contemporary association of an authentic Shakespeare with text-based theatre, for the invocation of a theatrical tradition of Shakespearean performance is a reminder of how reliant that theatre was on precisely the elements of performance that are conventionally marginalised in such productions. This often leaves reviewers, who have their own investment in upholding a text-based vision of Shakespearean performance, in a contradictory position. Footsbarn's decision to remove much of the text of the play and replace it with physical or emblematic staging was either praised as a modern equivalent of the itinerant, improvisational popular theatre of the early modern period or dismissed as a 'low' form of performance which did not give sufficient attention to the canonical text.

In his review, Kenneth Rea also noted that the Footsbarn production of *Lear* mixed tragedy and farce in a "shocking" way that made the play seem "like a grotesque dream". Thus, even boundaries of genre were transgressed as a result of the production's downplaying of the text and their alternative emphasis on physical action. The first half of the play was full of verbal, visual and physical humour, unlike most productions which emphasise the unfolding of an obviously tragic narrative from the moment Lear banishes Cordelia and Kent. In this production, for instance, when the King of France discovered that Cordelia was not guilty of a heinous crime, he exclaimed "Mais, c'est un problème domestique!" Similarly, the suspense conventionally created through Goneril's growing anger at her father's riotous behaviour was replaced by a comic squabble between three household servants about who could best play at being the king. The humour of the situation drew attention metatheatrically to the fact that the cast did indeed share the roles between them and dress/undress onstage so the changes of character were revealed to the audience. The

'king' therefore, was whichever character was available to don the robes at that moment rather than a consistent actor throughout. As such, the authority of Lear was de-essentialised through an emphasis on the performative construction involved in 'playing the king'.

To facilitate onstage transformations, each member of the cast played a 'good' character and an 'evil' character, and when playing the evil character, they would wear a mask. Some of the masks were animalesque, like Goneril and Regan's wolf and vulture masks and some were similar to *commedia* masks, such as the Brighella mask worn by Kent. This led to some intriguing doubling, such as Regan with the Fool and Cordelia with Goneril. However, Edmund was doubled with the role of Kent and it was when the actor was playing Kent that he wore a mask, not when playing Edmund. Practical theatrical considerations probably determined this exception, yet just being able to see the facial characteristics of an actor did create a closer relationship between that character and the audience. The production also cut the exchanges between Gloucester, Edmund and Kent at the beginning of the play. This was because the company wanted to create distinct stage images of the two family units as families. The three male members of the Gloucester family thus entered together as a family group only in the second scene where the audience was more able to compare and contrast them.

When the two brothers entered, they were playful with each other. Both graciously offered to let the other pass with a wave, although it soon became obvious that Edmund had the upper hand in their games. After Edgar accepted his offer to pass, for instance, Edmund then kicked him in the backside as he passed by. Edmund was played by the tallest of the three actors and was also the most well-dressed of the group, but he seemed to share little of the physical resemblance that immediately linked the

other two as family. These distinguishing features singled him out within the family group. Yet although much immediate information was thus given about his 'difference' in visual and physical form, his illegitimacy, as a specific form of difference, could only be rendered directly through the spoken word. Similarly, the physical and the visual could represent the *associations* his bastardy had with exclusion or with evil, but the *justifications* for Edmund's behaviour suggested by the text were difficult to convey without speech and were cut substantially in the production. This, in turn, raises questions about the production's extensive use of physical theatre archetypes. Such archetypes tend to form part of rigid, often simplistic, moral frameworks of good and evil. Using them as a basis for character construction inevitably reduced some of the complexity of the textual Edmund. It did, however, create opportunities for comedy and physicality that are not immediately obvious in the Shakespearean text.

Such moments were scattered through the rest of the production. While Gloucester held a letter in his hands from 'Edgar', for instance, Edmund spied over his shoulder. The way Edmund leant over him to read the letter made it clear he was not supposed to be looking at it, but the fact that he was doing so illustrated the way in which he was not bound by conventional codes of behaviour. He even spelt out Edgar's own name to him as he made him sign it. As he told Gloucester of Edgar's 'plan' to murder him, Edmund almost strangled Gloucester himself, so convinced was he of his own performance of Edgar's treachery. A few seconds later, Edmund was left alone onstage to proudly tell the audience he was the bastard. He outlined his plan to disinherit Edgar accompanied by discordant violin chords, which played up the humour of the situation. The ease with which he manipulated Edgar into flight again highlighted comedy. He made him return for a key and then almost made him faint when he told him he should go armed. He leant forward over him as he gave him instructions, forcing

Edgar to lean back in a position of submission to him. These scenes were played for their comic potential rather than their psychological or social insight. The representation continued to be melodramatic rather than tragic. Edmund was played as a skilful trickster entertaining the audience rather than as a character with a grudge to bear because of his social exclusion.

As soon as Edmund encountered Regan, there was an immediate physical attraction between them. Lust was economically conveyed by Regan cleaning Edmund's wound and Edmund licking her arm slowly, up and down, while Cornwall's back was turned. Later on, Goneril, Regan and Edmund were left alone onstage. Edmund's indecision about which of the two sisters to pursue was symbolised in the way he swayed backwards and forwards between them in a rocking motion. This 'piggy-in-the-middle' movement made clear Edmund's central, but rather passive position in the love tussle between the two sisters. A similar message was conveyed just before Albany confronted Goneril. Edmund and Goneril swayed backwards and forwards in what was an obviously sexual movement. Yet as they moved one way, Edmund was on top of Goneril. As they swayed back, however, Goneril was on top of him. Edmund even tried his luck with the third sister, Cordelia, after she was taken prisoner, but she rejected him by spitting in his face. Edmund was not, however, discouraged. Dressed in black leather and a brown battle jerkin, Edmund whispered his order to kill Cordelia to his soldier, curling himself up lovingly in a red banner before introducing the well-known line "Now, gods stand up for bastards" (I, II, 22). The action interweaved lust and battle for Edmund, but the placing of his line at this later stage of the play became profoundly ironic, for the next scene represented Edmund's defeat by Edgar. Lust and battle were once more connected while Edgar and Edmund

were fighting, as the two sisters struggled with each other in the background, spotlit against the curtain, before the death of both onstage.

This representation of Edmund had two main advantages. Firstly, it reminded theatre audiences just how much information about character and context can be conveyed by theatrical means other than the text. Secondly, it jolted conventional assumptions that Edmund should be played menacingly as an embodiment of evil and illustrated how much of a stock character he is even in the text. However, this also led to quite a superficial representation of the character. Such physical theatre is an excellent means of illustrating relationships between characters in an economical way. It can claim, with all justification, to be as Shakespearean as any text-based performance. Yet I wonder how satisfying such representations are for contemporary audiences whose experience of performance is more complex and multi-faceted. Footsbarn themselves expressed concern about working with foreign audiences in this way. They spoke of wanting to return to play in England, because of a danger with foreign audiences of exaggerating “almost to a borderline of pantomime”.⁶⁴ Is there a sense, then, that losing much of the text’s language may also have represented a ‘dumbing down’ of the theatrical experience and a patronising view of foreign audiences?

What is intriguing about exploring such questions at this point in time is that technology has provided another potential solution to the problem of Shakespearean language for audiences whose first language is not English. Surtitles have their drawbacks. They are often difficult to read and uncomfortable to read consistently.⁶⁵ Audiences take a certain amount of practice to use them to their advantage. Yet they have one major advantage in that they make it possible to move between other elements

⁶⁴ Geraldine Cousin (1985), *Op. Cit.* p.125

⁶⁵ It should be pointed out that one of the difficulties for Portuguese audiences could well be that television accustoms them to reading the translation *below* the visual image, whereas surtitles place the translation high *above* the visual image.

of performance and the translated text. This has other, potentially greater, advantages in that it enables foreign-language productions of Shakespeare to travel more widely and provides greater opportunities for translators. In a three month stay in England in 2003, I saw a Japanese production of *Pericles* surtitled in the National Theatre in London and a surtitled Lithuanian production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a Brighton Arts Festival. In Portugal, the Teatro Nacional São João in Porto has pioneered the use of surtitling in foreign-language productions and in theatre festivals. With the further development of this technology, theatre audiences may, hopefully, be able to read other stage languages apart from the text more consistently, without losing the very major pleasures offered by the text itself.

Conclusion

The three productions analysed in this chapter illustrate how much of a generalisation tends to be implicit in the notion of 'the theatrical experience of Shakespeare'. The Footsbarn production is a reminder that despite the conventional association of Shakespeare with text-centred performance, the text itself promotes the languages of the physical and the visual as much as the verbal. *The King is Alive* made clear that many of the developments affecting film are also affecting theatre and illustrated some common responses to these developments across artistic forms. The TNDM production of *Rei Lear* underlined the fact that although debates around television and theatre tended to constitute each as distinct, their current relationship is one of interaction and mutual necessity.

Such a context, rather than inspiring terror or contempt in theatrical practitioners, can be seen as advantageous and as affording new opportunities for the

performance of Shakespeare. Invariably, the model of the theatrical experience that is invoked in order to argue the case for the specificity of theatre is a nostalgic and reductive one that looks towards the past rather than the present and future. If the ‘intrusion’ of other media does one thing above others, it tends to make this clearer. Evidently, not all such intrusions are prompted by a concern with artistic experiment or a desire to push theatrical boundaries to their limits. There is much that is opportunistic and much that simply doesn’t work, but is this not as true for conventional text-based performances of Shakespeare as it is for these more hybrid productions? It seems untenable in the current cultural context to fetishise certain types of performance as in themselves more authentic in such an uncritical way.

This chapter has illustrated, through a focus on the character of Edmund, how such crossings can be productive. Whilst I do not argue that the performance of Diogo Infante in the TNDM production added much that was new to the role, as a freelancer he did foreground just how rigid and petrified the work of the TNDM company had become, and how television had been able to capitalise on this. The performance of Vusi Kunene as Moses, on the other hand, used the mixture of artistic forms in *The King is Alive* to draw a vital contemporary parallel between racial and sexual transgression. It constructed character in a multiple and fragmented way, in a manner that paralleled the discontinuous textual presentation of Edmund. The Footsbar production functioned as an important reminder of how much of the role can be conveyed in extra-textual forms, although it also considerably flattened Edmund’s discontinuity.

What is striking about the figure of Edmund, however, when comparing the written text with these performance texts, is a certain inability to bring out the possibilities of the dramatic role in performance. This, as I have argued throughout this

chapter, results from a tendency to make a coherent character of Edmund rather than construct representations based upon his textual discontinuity. The chapter has focused on the possibilities of exploring the porous boundaries of theatrical representation as one way of highlighting discontinuity in character construction. Yet the consequences of such moves for the representation of sexual transgression vary in each of the three productions. The greater autonomy of the performance text in *The King is Alive* extended the textual possibilities of the representation of sexual transgression without relying on coherent characterisation. Yet the greater autonomy of the performance text in the Footsbarn production of the play actually seems to have foreclosed such possibilities. The TNDM production of the play does not even indicate that its performance text owes as much to television as to theatre, but acting styles and performance objectives clearly appeal to television and its audiences. The televisually-orientated representation of sexual transgression in the production was subject to some interesting contradictions, most notably the passivity of the commodified male body. Yet these very processes of sexual commodification tend to run counter to attempts to highlight sexual transgression. Indeed, what might be termed its *sexualisation of malice* explicitly forestalled more radical readings of Edmund's outsider status by decontextualising him from other events and characters.

It could be argued that much of the apparent difficulty in bringing out the potential of Edmund in performance can be explained by social and historical changes in the meanings attached to bastardy as a form of sexual transgression. In other words, bastardy does not have the same connection nowadays with disruption to the social order which made it so potent in the early modern period. However, as I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, the meanings attached to bastardy in the period when the text was written were no more stable than they are now. However different they may be in

their content and form from the early modern period, contemporary ideological discourses continue to construct bastardy as both internal and external to the patriarchal family structure and to posit a connection between bastardy and social disorder. Only *The King is Alive* began to make such connections in its representation of Edmund. Moreover, connections between the sexual transgression that names Edmund at birth and the transgressive relationships he subsequently constructs with Goneril and Regan have also not been explored to any great extent in performance. Edmund thus remains a potentially very queer character, both in terms of his textual presentation and his theatrical representation. Yet for his queerness to emerge more forcefully there needs to be a production that places queer configurations at the heart of challenges to the hegemony of artistic form and the patriarchal family.

The final discussion of surtitling acts as a peculiarly appropriate metaphor for the concerns of this chapter. It is technology that can be used in a variety of artistic/media forms, and which enables audiences to read performance in more complex ways. However, it is also technology that makes clear such developments are only as good as those who work with them. Surtitling cannot make a bad translation good or a bad production better. If a translation smoothes over or softens references to bastardy, for instance, this can only be reflected in the surtitling. It can, however, make a good translation and a good production more widely-known and more accessible to audiences from a variety of cultures.

12. Edmund (Diogo Infante) takes a break from rehearsals for the cameras in the TNDM *Rei Lear*. Courtesy of the TNDM Archives.

