UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS/INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

'IS THIS THE PROMIS'D END?'

REINVENTING *KING LEAR* FOR A BRAZILIAN AUDIENCE

por

MARINA BEATRIZ BORGMANN DA CUNHA

Dissertação submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina em cumprimento parcial dos requisitos para obtenção do grau de

MESTRE EM LETRAS

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Esta Dissertação de Marina Beatriz Borgmann da Cunha, intitulada "*Is This the Promis'd End?" Reinventing King Lear for a Brazilian Audience,* foi julgada adequada e aprovada em sua forma final, pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras/Inglês e Literatura Correspondente, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, para fins de obtenção do grau de

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For my family who believed and supported.

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…. de setembro de 2003

ABSTRACT

"IS THIS THE PROMIS'D END?"

REINVENTING *KING LEAR* FOR A BRAZILIAN AUDIENCE

MARINA BEATRIZ BORGMANN DA CUNHA

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA
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As its title suggests, the core of this thesis is the play *King Lear* by William Shakespeare and the various possibilities and impossibilities inserted in the performances of different productions, starting from the Elizabethan theatre in England, when the play was originally released, until Brazilian contemporary years. Although this study has *King Lear* as its primary focus, other Shakespearean plays in performance during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Brazil were also addressed especially in their relatedness to their socio-cultural context. Drawing mostly on Jay L. Halio's theoretical paradigms this study proceeds with a detailed examination of *Rei Lear* production directed by Ron Daniels in 2000-2001, a production simultaneously concerned with commercial issues and the desire to communicate with a contemporary Brazilian audience.

Número de páginas: 130
Número de palavras: 40.965

RESUMO

Como o seu título sugere, o núcleo desta dissertação é a peça *King Lear* de William Shakespeare e as várias possibilidades e impossibilidades inseridas em performances de diferentes produções, começando com o teatro Elisabetano na Inglaterra, quando a peça foi originalmente estreada, até chegar ao Brasil contemporâneo. Apesar de o presente estudo ter *King Lear* como objetivo principal, outras peças de Shakespeare em performance durante os séculos dezenove e vinte no Brasil também foram consideradas especialmente em suas relações com o contexto sócio-cultural. Baseando-se principalmente nos paradigmas teóricos de Jay L. Halio este estudo prossegue com um exame detalhado da produção *Rei Lear* dirigida por Ron Daniels em 2000-2001, uma produção simultaneamente preocupada com questões comerciais e o desejo de comunicar-se com uma audiência brasileira contemporânea.

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KING LEAR IN PERFORMANCE : POSSIBILITIES AND IMPOSSIBILITIES

> The life a play has in the mind may be very different from the life it has on the stage. *King Lear,* which is a long and complex work, may rarely have been acted in full, and has usually been cut, rearranged or reworked for performance.
>
> R. A. Foakes ("*King Lear"* The Arden 4)

Many versions of performance criticism have been written, and the above epigraph works nicely as an introduction to text/performance dichotomy questions since the craft of theatre involves a great deal more than people talking on a stage. Foakes perceives that "What perhaps most distinguishes Shakespeare's language from everyday modern usage is its richness, density and flexibility; the cumulative effect is to open up resonances and implications in such a way that the possibilities for interpretation seem inexhaustible" (8). In practice, even under the best of circumstances, when scrupulous care has been taken to establish what the original state of the work might have been like when originally written, the simple act of performing Shakespeare for a contemporary audience constitutes an intention — sometimes controversial — to integrate the play into the experience of the modern world.

Jay L. Halio considers that "the evidence from multiple-text plays shows that neither Shakespeare nor his fellows regarded his scripts as beyond revision or in any sense untouchable" (Understanding 9). If we try to situate Shakespeare in this spectrum it is easy to note that this attitude allows contemporary directors to use Shakespeare's language and plots as occasions to deliver their own messages. Performances are aesthetic experiences that should

not be reduced to some easily-articulated message, since the meanings and significances of a given production are always primary in importance. To the audience is left the choice to accept them or not.

Although this study has a single primary focus, *King Lear* on the stage and in the provoked responses from the audience, each chapter approaches its particular topic. In the first chapter I unfold a brief panorama of theatrical performances in England, starting with the period referred to as the Renaissance, since this period sees a major cultural shift, and also because *King Lear* was written and first performed at that time. The analysis of *King Lear* in performance involves yet another complicating circumstance. Though I have referred to the text of the play, the text does not exist in a single authoritative version, since it is a conflation of two originals, Quarto 1(1608) and the Folio (1623). I adopted the position that neither of the texts is to be dismissed, but rather represented the play as a valuable reference which provides a model of discourse contributing to theatre studies.

At the same time, of the many controversies that surrounded *King Lear,* I certainly have to add the manner in which its reconstruction can be seen as an expression of political and social beliefs. Consequently, my study locates codes and meanings under a specific historical circumstance, rather than assuming that the performance text itself contains or produces immanent meanings. In simpler terms, chapter I provides a historical overview of the play in performance in England. It starts with a hint of the Elizabethan period and follows until the contemporary advent of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and my intention is to show the relationship between culture and commodity as it emerges from the past to an age of mass-produced cultural artifacts.

Chapter II presents a short survey of the trajectory of Shakespeare in Brazil in the nineteenth century, having as its main objective understanding performance in its historical

relationship to a mixed Portuguese/Brazilian audience. It starts with João Caetano, who under the social and political tensions of his time, struggled to create and maintain a national company, competing with the antagonism of some of his compatriots and the foreign troupes, which by the end of the century regularly visited the country. João Caetano, who, being an actor-manager performed mostly French adaptations, transcended the barriers separating the classics and was simultaneously an icon of popular and elite culture.

Moving on to the third decade of the twentieth century I take a look at the successful attempts made by Paschoal Carlos Magno and the Teatro do Estudante do Brasil, having students as actors recasting Shakespearean texts translated from English. With a distinguished interpretative community, and approaching the text with a different set of strategies, the group proposed the beginning of the "insurrection" against the commercial theatre.

For the performance portion of my analysis, I selected four contemporary Brazilian productions of *King Lear*, in part because they represent an attempt to popularize Shakespeare, and also because they allowed me better to evaluate the relationship between a text and its reception. The first studied production is from 1975, directed by Maria Tereza Amaral with Luiza Barreto Leite performing the main role of the play. My focus then shifts from being merely historical to the nature of critical practices generated in recent times, expanding the connotative possibilities of the term "Shakespearean", so as to include issues of language and power, as these were emerging in the complex and difficult period we had in Brazil in the 1970s. The choice of these productions, ranging from 1975, when our country was under a military government, to 2001, is not accidental and follows from both practical and theoretical reasons. In choosing them I was aware that in the scope of this thesis I could not aim at an encompassing analysis of Shakespeare's drama performance as a whole, but rather focus on a small number of case studies, for it would reduce the universe of research. My goal is to place

each production within a larger contextual field and to suggest the extent to which the meaning and significance of each are intimately tied to the circumstances in which it was produced and received.

In particular, I also understand performance in the sense proposed by Jay L. Halio, when he provides a number of questions that "should help audiences inquire more deeply into the nature of their experiences during and after witnessing a Shakespeare play in performance" (2). In such context the play reveals and negotiates meanings that might be different, since the spectators attending performances do not collectively respond in the same way.

Moreover, the way the classic text is treated, through the director's choices, as contemporary, with images that speak to an audience of a definite period of time, exploring the range of interpretations that performance provides and which sometimes can expand and complicate meaning, will also deserve attention. Also important to remember is the fact that any study in performance requires an understanding of the play in its complexity, contradictions and perceptions of others, being the audience to which the production is addressed, the most valuable, and sometimes extremely varied, element. What matters in performance is not only *what* the actors say but the *way* they say it, while exploring the singular cultural identity of the audience to which the production is addressed. Therefore, mostly through the Brazilian productions selected, I expect to perceive the development of Shakespearean performances over the decades, and indicate some of the possibilities of dialogue between a contemporary approach and the Elizabethan text.

The above argument, however, implies that the thoughts and events of a period and its literary production cannot, I think, be historically reproduced, since every new representation comes marked not only by the social structure in which it is now inserted, but also, and mostly, through the director's choices of (re)creation. In contrast to productions released in

the past, we can also reflect on the contradictory nature of the contemporary generation's beliefs, especially because it is more in tune with technology than any other before. Certainly, when it comes to contemporary productions of a play such as *King Lear,* undertaken with the full cooperation of not only the directors themselves but of a number of artists and technicians involved, in practice we are confronted with something original. However far from what we presume to have been Shakespeare's intentions, the attempt serves to integrate the Elizabethan plays into the experience of modern world, and there's always an act of discovery that connects and redefines linguistic and cultural codes.

Although contrasts can certainly be added to new productions in order to promote a Shakespeare "freed" from the English traditions, it is impossible to deny that "it is through the text that one can find Shakespeare's truth," as stated by Ron Daniels, who directed the 2000-2001 production of *Rei Lear*. At the same time, as mentioned before, my purpose here is not to analyze the language in a limited sense, but as a way to reveal the multiple possibilities inscribed in the performance of a reshaped text. More broadly, a close look at a few of the more significant productions can tell something not only about the play itself, but also about how Shakespeare functioned in twentieth-century Brazilian culture.

My main focus throughout this study will be on contemporary productions, but it might be of interest at this point to remember that some of the productions under my scope have a big time gap, which certainly must have reflected a different perception of the surrounding reality. In the 1970's, for instance, many directors in Brazil seemed to bend over political issues, and theatrical productions "feel they have failed in their civic duty if they have not directly confronted social and political issues in their work", as suggested by Benedict Nightingale (231).

In chapter III I take a detailed look at a Shakespearean project, one that could be said to symbolize a transition in terms of dramatic production. Here my intent is to gauge the nature of Ron Daniels' achievement and, more broadly, to show the relationship between culture and commodity as it emerges in the age of mass-produced cultural artifacts. My discussion of *Rei Lear* directed by Daniels, though also concerned with production and reception, discusses as well Daniels' approach to the play and his desire to respect the original text, while at the same time takes the liberty of expanding all the connotative possibilities that might exist in Brazilian Portuguese. Shakespeare is traditionally associated with high culture, but, as I intend to demonstrate, some of the analysed productions are distinct from this reputation, being more of popular culture variety. My study will be to seek out the range of possible realizations, since there would be little point in trying to pin down a single meaning for each line, but to recognize that a play remains open to various interpretations.

To analyse these performed versions, textually as well as culturally, is mostly to reveal a particular community to whom they were addressed. However, in addition to these social and cultural considerations, Shakespeare's plays actually unfold in no specific place at all, at least in no place that needs to be specified. Viewed in this way, the words of a text could never be mistaken for the whole content of the play. It is often referred that throughout Shakespeare's plays, and *King Lear* especially, there is a sense of a traditional order that is being torn apart. The play focuses on the realities and problems of living in a disordered world, as Shakespeare is concerned with asking questions rather than offering any answers: "Now, Gods that we adore, whereof comes this?" (1, 4, 299). Again, the lines can be nicely ambiguous and to the audience is left the chance to answer.

But at the same time, to understand Shakespeare in performance I have to ask whether our response to the play can be modified by the many different interpretations major

characters are able to give on stage. Shakespeare wrote his plays adding elements that remain open to various interpretations since his plays do not come with a message but with an increased awareness of the problems and choices that humanity has to face up. Yet, even if at the moment of performance, when the drama comes alive as never before, with actors creating with all their powers, part of the audience feels unable to grasp a Shakespeare play in its entirety. The discussion of how to construct a critical/individual response is obviously very abstract, and the effect of this is that *King Lear* raises fundamental questions about the whole nature and meaning of life. No wonder some stage directions often changed and the kind heart of Dr. Johnson found the fate of Cordelia unbearable. According to Kenneth Muir, many critics have echoed Johnson's complaint that "Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and, what is more strange, to the faith of the chronicles" (xxxi), but crowning his thesis about the complexities inherent in the study of *King Lear*, Muir says:

> The play is not, as some of our grandfathers believed, pessimistic and pagan: it is rather an attempt to provide an answer to the undermining of traditional ideas by the new philosophy that called all in doubt. . . In a world of lust, cruelty, and greed, with extremes of wealth and poverty, man reduced to his essential needs not wealth, nor power, nor even physical freedom, but rather patience, stoical fortitude, and love; needs perhaps, above all, mutual forgiveness, the exchange of charity, and those sacrifices on which the gods, if there are any gods, throw incense. (li)

Returning to the question of how the logic of justice operates in *King Lear,* and how the 'promised end', according to some critics, should be the reconciliation scene, we have all sorts of explanations. Does the play finally express a meaningless and cruel universe or a providential one? Critics have increasingly, since the 1960s, leaned toward the view that Lear dies unhappy, a victim 'more sinned against than sinning' (3.2.60), and anyone who blames the victim is lacking in compassion. Muir remarks that if Cordelia was chosen to die, it simply means that the gods do not intervene to prevent us from killing each other, and it is because of

her very virtues that she was the victim: like “in the old legends it was always the pure and innocent who were chosen to propitiate the dragon”(liii), Cordelia’s honesty was literally her only reward.

The text in a play like *King Lear* provides opportunities for the actor to impress the audience with his/her own reading of the part, to call attention to lines that can be used as a keystone for many different interpretations according to the director’s choices. Finally, my goal is to place each production involving different techniques and aesthetic aspirations within a larger contextual field and to suggest the extent to which the meaning and significance of each are intimately tied to circumstances in which they were produced and received.

CHAPTER 1

KING LEAR IN PERFORMANCE IN ENGLAND

1.1 AT SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

Before addressing the issue of *King Lear* at Shakespeare's time, I would like to consider some important aspects of Elizabethan times and conditions of dramatic performance. Different historical periods have interpreted Shakespeare in different ways, and in order to understand the challenges facing the production of a specific play in various periods, we have to start by overviewing the functions of the Shakespearean plays on the Elizabethan stage and its subsequent eras. One way of bridging the gap is to imagine what it meant to live under the material conditions determining human existence in Shakespeare's time and deduce what the performing consequences of these conditions might have been. So it seems important to point out that this Renaissance atmosphere in Northern Europe under study here is not the Middle Ages anymore: it is the Elizabethan Age, with a strong edge of Tudor characteristics, and this period does not remain the same from beginning to end. Elizabeth reigned for forty-five years (1558-1603), and when we think of Shakespeare as quintessentially Elizabethan, we have to remember that he was born in 1564, which is very near the beginning of the Queen´s reign, but his adult career did not start until thirty years later, near the period's end, and Shakespeare outlived it, after all.

At Shakespeare's time the spirit of the Renaissance was beginning to change people's way of looking at life and at themselves. The term Renaissance, meaning rebirth, is used to describe the flowering of art, scholarship and literature. Between 1536 and 1556 it is estimated that one fifth of all available land changed hands due to the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, and the largest proportion of this land was granted to untitled

gentry who began to gain power during Elizabeth's reign, opposing an economic and therefore secular power to the ancient nobility whose position was achieved through the laws of succession. This is reflected in a popular proverb of the day, "As riseth my good, so riseth my blood" (Kirkland and Papp 19).

Elizabeth I reigned for forty-five years (1558-1603)

When Italian scholars began to look into the long-buried works of ancient authors such as Homer, Plato and Virgil, they were releasing a vigorous new influence into all the Western culture. This cultural explosion eventually arrived in England, and education, which was formerly dominated by clergymen, became a prestigious possession now available not only for the very rich. When knowledge broke out of the cloisters and became available to society, who had hitherto been denied the chance to study could be schooled beyond the basics.

In London anything approaching theatrical organization was just beginning, and the professional acting companies of men and boys were slowly evolving from groups of itinerant players to permanent groups based in local theaters. Both plays and players existed before structures were built solely for the performance of the plays. Andrew Gurr refers to the fact

that "Players were a royal pleasure, and to please royalty was a major aim of the companies" (*Shakespearean Stage* 19). Throughout the medieval period, drama was for amateurs, since usually only Bible-based plays were performed by respectable members of the society. Joseph Papp and Elizabeth Kirkland in *Shakespeare Alive!* inform that "the wandering forefathers of the sixteenth-century actors split into two groups over time: the musicians (what we now think of as minstrels), and the professional players who were still under the protection of a nobleman (121).

The first playhouse in London was built in 1576 by James Burbage, a carpenter by profession before becoming a full-time actor. The construction of The Theatre for dramatic representations in the English language was an event that altered everything in the theater forever after. Burbage's building, ". . . a wooden, unroofed amphitheater, close kin to bear-baiting houses and the innyards . . ." (Gurr *Shakespearean Stage* 82), certainly had the great advantage of being a place where the actor could collect money from the audience before the beginning of the play. Still according to Gurr, all subsequent public theatres of this time followed Burbage's basic plan, as The Curtain, The Swan, The Rose, The Fortune, and The Globe itself were many-sided, open-air amphitheatres with a wooden frame, a paved yard and a projected stage.

Richard Burbage

In the decades leading to 1576, different groups of actors were strolling around England, but unlike their medieval predecessors, part of them earned the better part of their incomes from the hat they passed around at the end of their performances. According to Kirkland and Papp these groups were ". . . usually smaller than the old-religious ones, about five to eight people, and limited to one or two packhorses" (141). This meant that they were severely restricted in the props, costumes and stage machinery they could take along, resulting in very simple productions.

When young Shakespeare arrived in London by 1590, the city was the theatre capital of the "world", with three public playhouses disputing the growing audience: the aforementioned The Theatre, The Curtain, and The Rose, with ". . . players moving from group to group as their financial circumstances pushed them (Gurr *Shakespearean Stage* 27). London's population was "around 160,000 and rivalries must have been fierce, since the theatre circles were relatively small and most of the actors knew each other" (Kirkland and Papp 111). Also, given the strict laws of the time, a theatre play had to observe certain orthodoxies and conventions:

> Government regulation of the companies grew up as a natural concomitant of both the government's and the companies' interests. The government gained by its power to limit plays, players, and playhouses in what was spoken and by whom, and by the incidental command of the quality of the players who entertained the Court. The players gained above all protection from hostile local authorities. In the later years they profited by the security of the artificially monopolistic situation maintained under the Revels Office, and by such protection as the Master of the Revels could offer in preventing unauthorized performing or printing of the various companies' repertories. (Gurr *Shakespearean Stage* 51)

Throughout the late 1590's into the early 1600's, the London stage was controlled by two major companies, the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the Lord Admiral's Men. R. A. Foakes refers to "A sense of competitiveness between the leading companies" as an indicator

that theatres were "primarily concerned with making money" (*Shakespeare's Elizabethan* 17), suggesting that the 1590's gave way to "a quieter style (of play and acting), more suited to a new range of plays concerned less with battles, conquests, and spectacle than with romance and domesticity" (18).

According to John R. Brown in *Free Shakespeare,*

> ….The Elizabethan theater was irrepressibly popular. A single acting company, without permanent subsidy except for work done, could operate continuously for nearly fifty years. The Head of State and his senior officers, unskilled workers, learned scholars and the innovating, rebellious young, all patronized the same plays and the same theatre companies. Clearly the success of this theatre was different from that of our own, and so were the conditions of performance. (49)

"Elizabethan theatre was fashionable", continues Brown, adding that "audience was in the daylight. . . there was no scenic illusion to set tone or location, . . . only costumes and a few properties changed" (49-50). If Brown is right we can assume that actors probably worked less subtly, and must have been more outgoing and physical in order to sustain any illusion of reality. Foakes recognizes that "when we look back to a distant period it is hard to imagine day-to-day changes and developments, and easy to accept . . . a unitary 'Elizabethan stage '" (*Elizabethan Stages* 10*).* However precarious this way of working may seem, since there was no scenery or scene painting as such, but simple stage properties, the consequence of the lessening control would be the freeing of the audience, as well as the actor. The actor's main resource must have been "his ability to adapt to the play as it was played on each individual occasion (Brown 52). "In addition", Brown continues, "instead of a director, there would be a book keeper, as the Elizabethans called their functionary who combined the jobs of prompter and stage-manager" (52). This way of working is illustrated by the practice in Elizabethan theatres of not giving the actor the full text of the play in which he was to perform, but only his own part. If we agree with the idea that Elizabethan theatre gave performances that

changed daily, and since space and time were not represented visually, we have to accept Brown's remark:

> Supposing that *King Lear* were 'set upon a stage,' forgetting scenery and carefully drilled production support, and placing the audience in the same clear light, what might be seen*?* . . . The actor would be a man among other men, in space, seeking a performance controlled by the words and based in his own imaginative conception and physical creation of his role. . . the Elizabethans (actors) flourished under these conditions; and so did their dramatists, and their audiences. (54-5)

The fact that plays were likely to be changed in the acting process, as actors decided which line worked and which did not, makes us believe that the stagings of the plays that we have now are often different from what Shakespeare originally wrote and also quite different from what happened in performance. Foakes points out that "The life a play has in the mind may be very different from the life it has on the stage. *King Lear*, which is a long and complex work, may rarely have been acted in full, and has usually been cut, rearranged or reworked for performance" (4). Only later were versions of these performances turned into printed books. According to Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor,

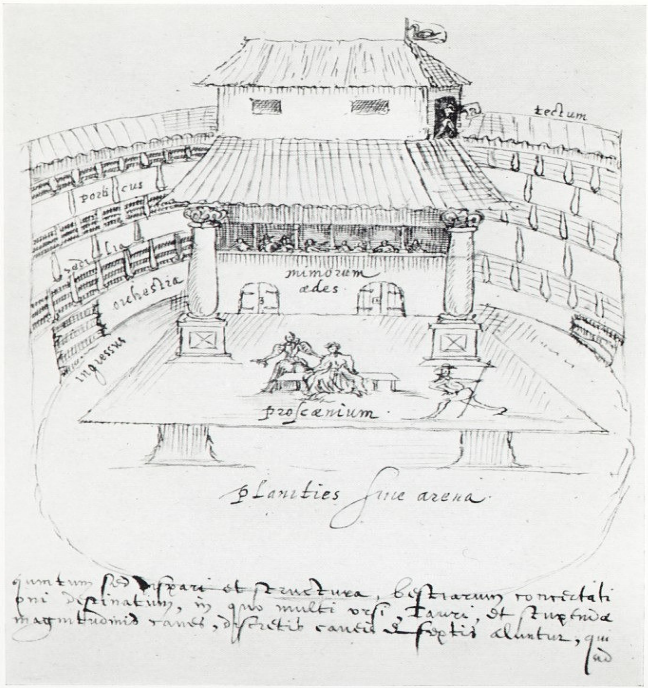
> *King Lear* first appeared in print in a quarto of 1608. A substantially different text appeared in the 1623 Folio. Until now, editors, assuming that each of these early texts imperfectly represented a single play, have conflated them. But research conducted mainly during the 1970's and 1980's confirms an earlier view that the 1608 quarto represents the play as Shakespeare originally wrote it, and the 1623 Folio as he substantially revised it. (909)

Wells and Taylor also draw our attention to the fact that "there are two distinct plays of *King Lear*, not merely two different texts of the same play; so we print edited versions of both the Quarto ('*The History of*. . .') and the Folio ('*The Tragedy of*. . .")(xxxvii). Tracking the material sources of these texts can reveal a hidden history of staging, where collaboration produced — and still does — altogether different interpretations of the same play. Andrew Gurr in *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* mentions that

> What seduced playgoers between 1587 and the end of the century was more than anything else an increase in the emotional immediacy of the play's subject matter.

> Militarism and hostility to Spain and Spain's Catholicism amongst London audiences found mirrors on stage. For more than ten years wars and stories of wars were the main meal on the broad platforms of the amphitheatres. (132)

Later the same author affirms: "Playgoing became a uniform custom in the 1590s for a variety of reasons. The only playhouses available were amphitheatres, which made one kind of choice uniform" (133). When in 1599 The Globe was built, a beginning of a new era of prosperity for the Chamberlain's Men and for William Shakespeare started. There is relatively little direct evidence about audience reception of Shakespeare's plays during his lifetime, since "few playgoers took the trouble to record their thoughts about their afternoons entertainment" (Wiggins 30). At Shakespeare's time it seemed to be important that the location of the new theatre was considered ideal, "just south of the riverbank, not far from the competing Lord Admiral's Men at The Rose", and the effective result was that "The Globe and The Rose probably drew about 1250 people apiece daily, about half of their capacity, being bigger for the first performance of a new play and on the public holidays" (Papp and Kirkland 143).

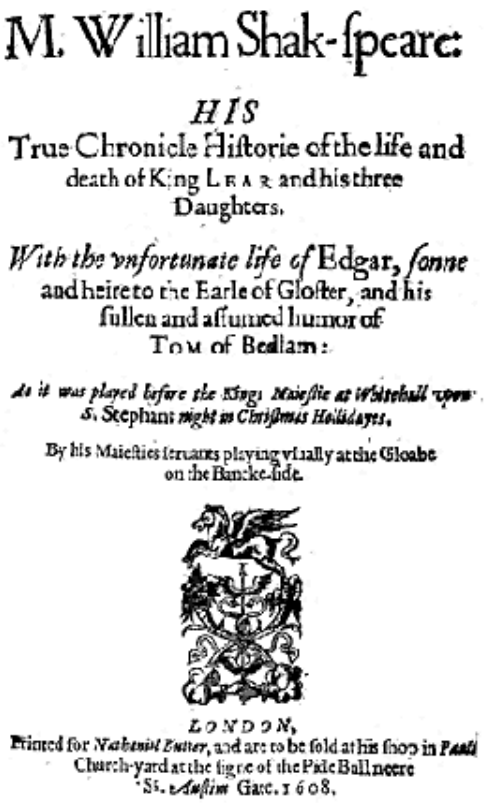


The Swan

When James I (James VI of Scotland) came to the English throne in 1603, plays became a royal pleasure, with the king granting royal patronage to chief London companies. Shakespeare's acting company, which thus became the King's Men, performed before the court in the royal palaces, as well as to audiences in the public theatres. The tendency to think that Shakespeare and his fellows acquired fame and popularity under the reign of King James needs to be perspectivised when we read in Wiggins that there is strong evidence that "for the sake of public health or public order, the London playhouses were frequently closed between 1603 and 1608, perhaps more often than they were open" (28). To be a shareholder in a London company was to be involved in a commercial enterprise with a substantial turnover in both income and expenditure. In these circumstances, the King's Men needed to maximize their income during the periods when they were able to perform.

In 1609 the King's Men acquired an indoor theatre, the Blackfriars, to use in addition to The Globe, "but it is not known whether the company operated separate repertories at the two theatres (Wiggins 28). Several of The Globe's actors became nationally famous, and while some characters grew to be coextensive with the plays in which they appeared, others transcended them. Some of Shakespeare's great tragic characters, including *King Lear*, were written for Richard Burbage, who had made his name as an actor who portrayed emotion realistically, while Robert Armin, the company's comedian, was probably the first to play the Fool. As pointed out by Wiggins, "The careers of Shakespeare and Burbage had coincided with, and to a large extent contributed to, a quarter century of exceptional creativity in English drama and theatre" (38).

Not much is known about King *Lear* in performance in Shakespeare's time. Stanley Wells' statement that "Like most plays of the time, *King Lear* had been performed before it appeared in print" (the play was entered in the Stationer's Register on 26 November 1607) (4) confirms Halio's claim that "Although *King Lear* is a difficult play, it is not difficult to stage. . .. The play thus eminently suited the bare apron stage of The Globe, where it was probably performed in 1605, although the first record of any performance is at court on 26 December 1606" (39).



M. William Shak-ſpeare:

HIS

True Chronicle Hiſtorie of the life and death of King LEAR and his three Daughters.

With the vnfortunate life of Edgar, ſonne and heire to the Earle of Gloſter, and his fullen and aſſumed humor of Tom of Bedlam:

As it was played before the King Maieſtie at Whitehall vpon S. Stephans night in Chriſtmas Hollidayes.

By his Maieſties ſeruants playing vſually at the Gloabe on the Bancke-ſide.

LONDON,
Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be ſold at his ſhop in Paules Church-yard at the ſigne of the Pide Bull neere St. Auſtins Gate. 1608.

King Lear at the Globe in 1608.

However, still in what concerns the performances of a play, the chief distinction between London's companies and travelling companies was their size, and rather than display a finished and highly worked production, the Elizabethan theatre gave performances that changed daily. To conclude, the differences between Elizabethan performances and

contemporary ones are of great importance, and clearly the success of that theatre was different from our own. We can only have some insights of how Shakespeare's plays were performed and received and occasionally notice how different from our own were the physical conditions in which the actors had to work. The main difference was that the audience was not placed at a distance, but at a position of close contact created by the actors with all their powers. Since Elizabethan performances were visually simple, movement and voice would have to be lively and physically strong. The main action took place on the main stage, and because it was surrounded on three sides by the audience, it could create an intimacy we do not get today on the conventional stage with a proscenium arch. Soliloquies could appear to be spoken confidentially to the audience and sound less artificial than they often do today. Also, where contemporary scenery provides the settings, Shakespeare had to provide scenery by means of the text, as in the storm scene in *King Lear,* the words "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!" (3.2.1) would be accompanied by noises of thunder. However precarious this way of working may seem to us, such limitations must have provided variety and excitement, and under these conditions Shakespeare's plays flourished.

1.2 IN THE RESTORATION

So far as the evidence enables us to judge, the King's Men acting company had been royalistic since 1603, when James I issued privileged status to its shareholding members; according to John Russell Brown, "Early in 1613, the King's Men presented fourteen plays at court, and a little later the same season repeated two of them and added four more titles" (50). Later, when King Charles I divorced from the Parliament on 10th January 1642, the English civil wars had officially begun. A parliamentary edict temporarily forbade performances of

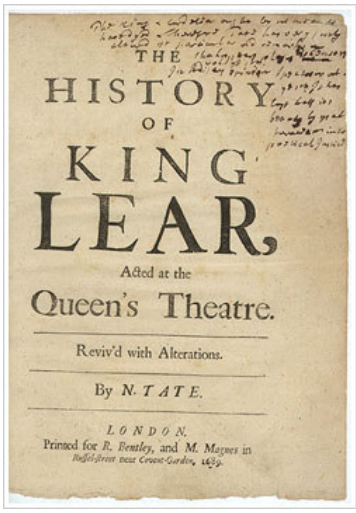
any kind of plays, claiming that the public stage did not well agree with calamities. "The world turned upside-down" (39), Wiggins affirms, adding that

> English civil authorities have often responded to the start of a war by closing places of public entertainment; the Civil War in 1642 was no exception. . . London's theatres were officially closed by a Parliament seeking 'all possible means to appease and avert the wrath of God'. It was the beginning of the end for the King's Men. . . . This was neither the first nor the last time that the capital's theatres were closed during a period of national emergency. (39)

Gary Taylor, who seems to see parallels between the monarchy and the theatre, writes: "The English monarchy and the English theatre fell together. . . . And when they rose again, they rose together" (9). All the theatres closed when Charles I was sentenced to death, and when his son and heir Charles II was restored to the throne, public performances were again allowed. And even though playhouses were closed for almost twenty years, with the advent of the Restoration, drama was back and strongly anchored in the House of Lords, the Anglican Church and of course, the monarchy. When the English court came back from the exile in France, it brought the freeness of and manners which reflected much of French influence, "there was, to quote the document which officially reopened the theatres, ' an extraordinary license used in things of this nature'" (Wiggins 44).

What happened in the theatres in 1642 isolates and makes unusually clear a process that affects works of art and thought whenever confronted by the new established status quo. A performance may lead to micro-political engagement with the community through and thereby transgressing and challenging the desirable hegemonic identity. The affirmation that "One of the many permanently relevant questions which *King Lear* explores is the nature of power, its perils and possibilities" (Salgado 34) still holds. Although English theatre was revived by the Stuart dynasty and many of Shakespeare's plays were immediately performed after the restoration of the monarchy, "*King Lear* [reappearing] in 1664, but [seeming] to have provided no hint of the immense success it would enjoy in Nahum Tates´s version of 1681"

(Dobson 51), it is true to say that the theatrical sensibility in post-Civil War England was a distinctive one if compared to what happened fifty years before.


THE
HISTORY
OF
KING
LEAR,
Acted at the
Queen's Theatre.
Reviv'd with Alterations.
By N. TATE.
LONDON,
Printed for R. Bentley, and M. Magnes in
Russel-street near Covent-Garden, 1689.

King Lear at the Queen's Theatre, showing Tate's version

If we look closely at the productions staged during the period known as the Restoration, we cannot help notice some obviously new material characteristics in public theatres, such as the end of the outdoor playhouse and the enlargement of the area behind the proscenium arch. Michael Dobson affirms: "Sumptuously baroque in costume and music, technologically sophisticated in design and elegant in diction, the Shakespeare of the Restoration and early eighteenth-century stage belonged at least as much to the Enlightenment as to the Renaissance . . . in every sense a new perspective on theatrical production" (45). Perhaps more relevant than all that was the fact that the texts were adapted to suit the new audiences and that actresses were performing women's roles. Women began to appear on English stages ". . . at the same time that pornography began to appear on English bookstalls" (Taylor 19).

Taylor adds that "adaptations . . . — Nahum Tate's *King Lear*, to name only the most succesful — were, for later critics, the most obvious and deplorable aspect of the

Restoration's treatment of Shakespeare" (20). The process of adaptation during the Restoration greatly differs from what happened in earlier periods. Only during the Restoration those changes turned into printed books, like Tate's aforementioned adaptation of *King Lear,* when he opted to remove the Fool, and in addition created a love plot between Cordelia and Edgar. Tate's version, which was performed for almost 140 years, gave a happy ending to *King Lear* in which the bad are punished and the good rewarded, as a way to bring the play closer to the taste patterns of the time.

Moreover, part of Tate's reason for adapting is not simply to accommodate the audience, but to create a text that is less sensitive to political issues of the time. *The History of King Lear* was adapted from Shakespeare's text after the Restoration of Charles II to the throne and therefore intends to create a theme of restoration that is not present in Shakespeare. Ironically, Tate's attempts to concentrate meaning for a specific society have diminished the strength of his ideas over time. Halio argues that while adapting *King Lear,* Tate has also substantially flattened the play ("Introduction" 37).

It could also be argued that Tate's decision to give his play a happy ending brought the story closer to Holinshed's *Chronicles,* which was Shakespeare's source and in which Cordelia's forces won the war at the end, ruling thereafter. Tate's play is full of recognition on the part of Lear, whereas at the end of Shakespeare's play, the sources are changed in order to express convictions, discharging the happy-ending of the original story, in which Cordelia triumphs in battle and Lear is restored to his throne. Shakespeare has Lear die over the body of his dead Cordelia, revealing a bitter split between the ideal and the real, when virtue, acquired through suffering and experience, is not rewarded. Halio argues that "Whatever the truth may be, available evidence does not point to *Lear* as a frequently performed play. The theme of fallen royalty and the absence of a love story may explain its lack of popularity. The situation

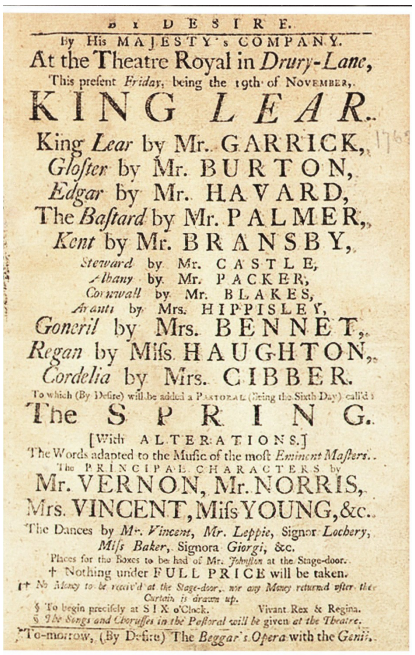
changed after 1681, when Nahum Tate rewrote it to suit contemporary taste" ("Introduction" 37).

For the next century and a half audiences preferred Tate's happy-ending version of the play, but directors, as well as managers and producers, have always changed plays mostly in order to improve finances. Tate's version was also modified: Dobson claims that "adaptations as these, whatever their ostensible politics, had fitted Shakespearean tragedy to the comparatively bourgeois tastes and demands of the later Restoration and eighteenth century" (58). As we shall see, the eighteenth century *King Lear* changed into a curious mixture of early pieces of Shakespeare's Quartos and Folio together with Tate's adaptation. The economic reasons were always clear, since old plays were plentiful, and their authors did not need to be paid for their work, almost all the Restoration repertoire consisting of adaptations of old plays.

1.3 IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY : THE "AGE OF GARRICK"

The eighteenth century was a time of great material improvement and theatres prospered, demonstrating the commercial vitality of the entertainment industry. The expansion of theatrical auditoriums in London was accompanied by the erection of new theatres in the provinces. Outside London, England "was better equipped with theatres in the late eighteenth century than in the late twentieth" (Taylor 115). From Taylor's statement we can assume that this artistic vitality created a demand for plays; in fact, referring to the eighteenth century, Halio remarks that "more and more editions of Shakespeare's works began appearing" ("Introduction" 39). By contrast, Tate's version of *King Lear* would still be pleasing audiences

and would not be removed from the acting texts "until the 1830's" (Wiggins 58), nearly two hundred years after the Restoration.



A DESIRE.

By His MAJESTY's COMPANY.

At the Theatre Royal in *Drury-Lane*,

This present *Friday*, being the 19th of NOVEMBER,

KING *LEAR*.

King *Lear* by Mr. GARRICK,
Gloster by Mr. BURTON,
Edgar by Mr. HAVARD,
The *Baſtard* by Mr. PALMER,
Kent by Mr. BRANSBY,
Steward by Mr. CASTLE,
Albany by Mr. PACKER,
Cornwall by Mr. BLAKES,
Arauti by Mrs. HIPPISLEY,
Goneril by Mrs. BENNET,
Regan by Miſs HAUGHTON,
Cordelia by Mrs. CIBBER.

To which (By Deſire) will be added a PASTORAL (Being the Sixth Day) call'd

The SPRING.

[With ALTERATIONS.]

The Words adapted to the Muſic of the moſt *Eminent Maſters*.

The PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS by
Mr. VERNON, Mr. NORRIS,
Mrs. VINCENT, Miſs YOUNG, &c.

The Dances by *Mr. Vincent*, *Mr. Leppie*, Signor *Lochery*, *Miſs Baker*, Signora *Giorgi*, &c.

Places for the Boxes to be had of Mr. *Johnſton* at the Stage-door.

† Nothing under FULL PRICE will be taken.

†† *No Money to be receiv'd at the Stage-door, nor any Money returned after the Curtain is drawn up.*

§ To begin precisely at SIX o'Clock. Vivant Rex & Regina.

§ § *No Songs and Choruſſes in the Paſtoral will be given at the Theatre.*

To-morrow, (By Deſire) The *Beggar's Opera* with the *Genii*.

Mr. Garrick performing King Lear at the Theatre Royal.

By every measure of material prosperity the eighteenth century was good to England, and artistic vitality expanded the theatrical market. Peter Holland argues that as regards "English Theatre the mid-eighteenth century cannot be called anything other than the Age of Garrick. No one had ever achieved such dominance over the stage" (69). David Garrick ran Drury Lane Theatre, combining the functions "of leading actor and what we would call artistic director, to the considerable profit both of himself and the theatre" (Taylor 115). As an actor, Garrick always privileged serious dramas, and, as stated by Taylor, "Drury Lane had a virtual monopoly on serious drama, while its competitors devoted themselves to opera or popular pantomime" (118). As an actor and producer, Garrick frequently claimed that he was bringing back the original texts, as written by Shakespeare. In promoting Shakespeare, however, he was always promoting himself and his company. For Holland,

> Garrick's most decisive innovation was the refusal to fix the text into an unalterable mode. While his performance of the particular Shakespeare roles which he claimed as his territory quickly settled, establishing the approach to character, the reading of the part, early in his confrontation with each one and then continuing to play that same interpretation for the rest of his career, his approach to the playing-text was one of continual consideration, re-evaluation, and restoration. While Garrick's first and last performances as *Lear*, thirty-four years apart, would have been recognizably the same, the *Lear* of his farewell season spoke far more Shakespeare than would have been conceivable earlier. (72)

In the eighteenth century Shakespeare was repeatedly considered the world's greatest dramatist and poet and helped in the development of a consciously English art, as an effort to celebrate English cultural independence, now defied by some other Europeans and even Americans who slowly started to expand their international reputation. Taylor states that "England's victory in the Seven Years War was a decisive event in the growing international resistance to French political and cultural hegemony and Shakespeare was the chief artistic beneficiary of that resistance . . . . The English acclaimed Shakespeare as their greatest and most characteristic genius" (122).

According to Halio, "*King Lear* in the eighteenth century is thus a curious combination of Shakespeare and Tate. The Folio text, moreover, may not have been totally eclipsed. It was in its 'Tatefied' form, however, that *King Lear* rose in popularity, though it did not rival the other great Shakespearean tragedies" ("Introduction" 39). Halio also brings evidence that "The several versions of Garrick's *Lear*s show how fluid the play remained in the hands of a capable and dynamic actor-manager" (39). The interpenetrations of aesthetic and political values in *King Lear* can still be seen in Garrick's age, but despite all adaptations, Shakespeare's cultural supremacy survived and was acclaimed throughout the eighteenth century.

Shakespeare plays were searched and performed in different ways and started to be exported together with English engravings and caricatures, which were the most widespread

art forms at the end of the eighteenth century. Actors and scenes from popular plays were among the favorite subjects for prints at an age when English art drew much from the theatre. Moreover, publishing of all kinds of books, newspapers and magazines was one of the most successful industries of the period; discussing the flourishing print industry, Taylor mentions that "publishers searched for new ways to package the same old product. . . and other editions contributed to the marketing of Shakespeare troughout and beyond the English speaking world" (128-29). England's prosperity in the eighteenth century was built on its success as a trading nation, and Shakespeare was one of its most successful cultural exports.

1.4 IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Europe began the nineteenth century dominated by the romantics and their beliefs in feelings, intuition, and imagination. Once more Shakespeare's plays became the object of repeated readings. Different from the previous century, the age of literary Romanticism and of Romantic criticism of Shakespeare "was also the age of melodrama" (Taylor 138). Melodrama was introduced in Drury Lane and Covent Garden and was mainly popular and proletarian in theme and treatment. New interpretations of Shakespeare were everywhere, and according to Bate there was "a tendency in illegitimate Shakespeare to familiarize elevated material, to bring high tragedy down to the level of the audience" (105). At the same time, melodrama emphasizes "extremes of emotion and reaction together, breaching the social decorum which proclaims tragedy high and comedy low" (106). The burlesque overhauls Shakespeare's original in order to make it appeal to a specific audience, giving nineteenth century theatre-goers what they wanted from Shakespeare, in a clear effort to make plays fit that particular period of time.

At this point it may be useful to glance at the wider context of nineteenth century social and technological changes in England, if only because we can thereby gain a sharper focus on the kind of social energy that shaped Victorian perception of Shakespeare and how these changes greatly affected intellectual tastes. Innovations revolutionized productivity, efficiency, prices, and working conditions, but mostly the rise of literacy in middle and working classes was accompanied by changes in the distribution of printed matter. Taylor mentions that "Between 1828 and 1853 average book prices declined 40 percent, . . . including of course reprints of Shakespeare" (184). Shakespeare's plays were not only seen on stage, as in previous centuries, but also became the object of repeated readings.

Charles and Mary Lamb first published *Tales from Shakespeare* in 1807 as condensations of Shakespeare for young middle-class children, since by the nineteenth century a familiarity with Shakespeare's texts was expected of every educated person, and most readers, as stated by Taylor, "first encountered him in versions deliberately reshaped to make them fit for tender minds" (209). At that time reading was a way of recovering literary meanings rather than producing the text as an acted drama.

King Lear's tragedy was then best known in the way Keats described his encounter with the play. The poem's title is as revealing as its location. Keats sits down, to "read" *King Lear* again: "On sitting down to read King Lear once again." The fact indicates that *Lear* was more powerful on page than on stage, and it was a poet's duty to revisit the "printed" King. Keats finds *King Lear* "bitter-sweet" and does not mention any of the characters of the play. The poem Keats wrote is a sonnet, and itself an act of reverence to Shakespeare's sonnets that had been reprinted only once after the first publication in 1609.

Miss Eliza Logan as Cordelia.
(England, middle-nineteenth century)

Although the Romantics quoted and criticized *Hamlet* intensely, they admired *King Lear* even more. Referring to Keats and his admiration for *King Lear,* Taylor writes: "it was *King Lear* he chose to illustrate his famous axiom that 'the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeable evaporate' " (159). Jonathan Bate mentions an essay published in 1811 by Charles Lamb in the *Reflector*, in which he famously argues that *King Lear* "should not be staged" because it fostered self-promotion of actors like Garrick and also partly because the original text was "butchered" by adaptors like Nahum Tate. Here is Lamb, as quoted by Bate:

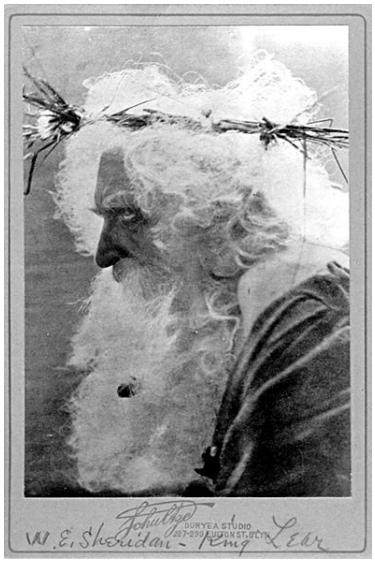
> On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear, — we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodized (sic) from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. (93)

If for Keats *King Lear* should better be read than performed, and for Lamb it was an impossible play to be staged, for the Romantic intellectuals it could only be admired if printed, since, as we have seen, "in the theatre one merely saw Lear, whereas alone in the study one could *be* Lear" (ibid).

The mental illness of old king George III was a serious political reason to discontinue the performances of *King Lear*, as the play would suggest uncomfortable parallels with the living royal family. For an imaginative reader, George III or *King Lear* might be transformed into a tragic hero who maintains the organic ancient core of power. For the romantics *Lear* became the colossal father-king, representing power located paradoxically in the frail body of an old man. *King Lear* embodies the metaphor of the king as a father, the children as subjects, with much of the preservation of society depending upon the children's obedience to the king. The unfilial behavior of Goneril and Reagan had also driven the old king to insanity. A breakdown of authority and the imaginative identification between the father-child symbol would again provide an uncomfortable resemblance to George III. To be sure, when the mad king died in 1820, the two patented theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, "were quick to stage revivals of *King Lear,* but within days a third rival version could be seen at the Coburg: a melodrama by W.T. Moncrieff called *The Lear of Private Life! or, Father and Daughter*" (Bate 105). In Bate's view, Moncrieff's intention was to borrow the title character in order "to bring high tragedy down to the level of the audience" (ibid).

Edwin Forrest as King Lear.

Victorian scholars dedicated much of their time to the study of past languages and literature, in the search of hidden meanings and also to draw indirect allusions to contemporary issues. Taylor affirms that the "educated insistence on an authentic text, like the insistence on pictorial accuracy, belonged to the period's intensifying sensitivity to historical development" (201). Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear* is no longer prevalent because, ironically, his attempts to concentrate meaning on a specific society have diminished the strength of his ideas over time, and "It was Macready's 1838 production which finally reintroduced the Fool into *Lear,* over 150 years after Nahum Tate had banished him" (Bate 111).



W.E. Sheridan as King Lear.

Certainly different forms of adaptation of *King* Lear can be interpreted and defended as a decision to be free to carry out creative impulses, and also by assuming that in art authenticity much depends on personal values. Unlike the situation in the beginning of the century, many of the theatre-goers at the end of the period were not scholars but merely listeners and spectators who would rather watch Shakespeare coming to life through sounds

and movement of actors like Edwin Forrest and W.E. Sheridan than through the pages of a book.

1.5 IN THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

During the twentieth century many productions have made distinguished attempts to prove that Charles Lamb was wrong when he said that *King Lear* was unactable. Since only the Bible has been translated into more languages than Shakespeare, his inventiveness and versatility seem to have had no bounds, supplying his plays with contemporary elements that reflect immediate concerns of the audience. Such is the versatility of these productions that any sensitive discussion of *King Lear* in performance must evoke the multiple ways in which the twentieth century recreates Shakespeare's texts, inspiring reflection upon the processes of reproduction. Halio, for instance, suggests that "each age discovered new ways of representing the characters in *King Lear",* adding that "Changes reflect changing tastes in art and drama, the abilities of specific actors, and directorial 'concepts'" ("Introduction" 45).

Gamini Salgado appropriately remarked that "as readers, actors or directors, our knowledge of Shakespeare's dramatic art obviously depends on the text of his plays. But the question, what *is* a Shakespearean text?, is simpler to ask than to answer" (70). The text-performance dichotomy has preoccupied Shakespeare studies for decades, always trying to conceive how the theatrical experience is able to shift from page to stage replacing written words with acting scenes. The growth of the radio and the cinema as ways of entertainment and their significance were associated to popular culture to an extent never before seen in the theatre. Culture started to be sold as a commodity, a product that lends luster to the one who sponsored such cultural activities. The situation that can be regarded as a gradual

demystification of the relationship between art and commerce was not different in England than it was in the rest of the Western developed world.

Anthony Davies points out that

> By the 1920's, then, the impulses behind the growth of British theatre were moving in two directions; one towards small decentralized repertory companies whose audiences were being exposed to the idea of plays as entertainment through the development of the cinema and, later, the accessibility of radio drama, and another towards centralization of a national repertory theatre, financed by national and municipal subsidy. (140)

Later Davies adds that the evolution of the theatrical presentation of Shakespearean plays during the first half of the twentieth century, and with "subsidy still no more than a vision", much depended on the dedication and energy of Lilian Baylis and Barry Jackson, who, "not calmed by the poor resources. . ." (140), provided regular seasons to the Old Vic's audiences. By 1918, with the help of Ben Greet as the director, the company was "giving regular seasons of Shakespeare to its audiences" (141).

The conviction that Shakespeare addressed his best works to a cultural elite also found expression in less orthodox venues. The growth of graduate schools and the redefinition of universities as research institutions expanded the scholarly base, increasing the number of people employed to study, teach, and write about Shakespeare. Major works were aimed at a more circunscribed audience. In the early twentieth century some iconoclastic productions of Shakespeare were performed by amateur actors manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity. Old-staging productions originated in the same insistence upon material authenticity. Shaw, like Booth and William Poel, insisted on historical accuracy and material circumstances of Renaissance England, trying to reconstruct the reality the plays themselves envisaged. Taylor mentions that according to Shaw "Shakespeare's plays could not be defended as representations of human behavior; they could be appreciated only as musical scores for several voices" (268). Objections to Victorian rearrangement of

Shakespeare's text were based on the fact that "such alterations destroyed the 'design' of the composition, just as they would destroy a Mozart symphony" (ibid). In part these opinions only developed a way out of the Victorian historicism, for the desired authenticity could never be achieved in the way it was to Elizabethan audiences. If Shakespeare's actors originally performed in contemporary costumes, then it would be more authentic for modern productions to have their costumes equally made in a contemporary way.

In a century that has changed to be a world of mass production, there was the competition with films which radically redefined the nature of drama. The first building "specially designed as a cinema opened in 1907" (Taylor 273), and hundreds of films were produced adapting Shakespeare's plays. With the advent of sound, films could even incorporate Shakespeare's dialogue, integrating music and movement to a text which most of the times was heavily abridged. Shakespeare's plays could be interpreted on two levels corresponding to the social division of educated upper classes and uneducated masses. Thereafter cinema became entertainment for everyman while live theatre became a minority taste, an art for the elite, and as social historians have shown, revealing ruptures among the ways of social and communicative actions, that increasingly had the tendency to collide. For some, the new methods of contemporary creation were merely inferior art and should be treated as a special suspect category, while to others they are symbols of the transition from book culture to electronic culture. Michael Anderegg, in his preface to *Orson Welles Shakespeare and Popular Culture,* states that the modern media is a valuable "attempt to popularize and disseminate Shakespeare and unlike stage productions, they exist in a more or less permanent form and thus allow us to better evaluate the relationship between a text and its reception" (x).

Anthony Davies mentions Galsworthy, Granville-Barker, Shaw, and Archer, "who opened a season at the Court Theatre in Sloane Square on 18 October 1904" (139), as regards their attempt to create a new English drama, redefining Shakespeare for the twentieth century, while at the same time claimed for a British National Theatre and the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee. Later Davies argues that the same committee helped to fund the establishment of the first permanent repertory company at the Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, which evolved into the Royal Shakespeare Company (140). In 1923 Archer shifted his support to the Old Vic, which would eventually evolve into the National Theatre, and "established itself as a theatre giving regular seasons of Shakespeare to its audiences" (ibid).

The Royal Shakespeare Company dominates Shakespeare production in London, and unlike its rivals in the capital, operates nationally and internationally. Taylor reports that "The RSC runs two theatres in London and three in Stratford; it performs for five weeks a year in Newcastle, and some touring productions are frequently shown to audiences in New York and Los Angeles, Washington DC and cities in Australia" (305). Don E. Wayne considers that under the direction of Peter Hall and, subsequently, Trevor Nunn, the RSC built its reputation for producing Shakespeare from the vantage point of "a modernist aesthetic and, at times, from an avowed concern with contemporary political and social issues" (49). Distinct from both the orthodox representations of vice and virtue, the RSC is not unified nor conclusive, but somewhat open-ended, with a multiplicity of divergent social and cultural functions and by its standards other companies are judged.

Early in the history of the RSC, such was the versatility of some of its productions that Shakespeare's cultural presence frequently promoted political identities and disrupted the bourgeois status quo: "I am a radical, and I could not work in the theatre if I were not. The

theatre must question everything and disturb its audience", said Peter Hall in the early stages of the Company. (qtd. in Sinfield 172). In the second half of the twentieth century the RSC is often considered the most successful theatrical organization in the Western world, in the case of some productions, having evolved from a nostalgic theatrical company pleasing tourist-pilgrims to Stratford into a major, innovative company of international renown.

Granville-Barker does not share Charles Lamb´s opinion about *King Lear,* and in his famous critical prefaces on the plays of Shakespeare he argues that " Shakespeare meant it to be acted, and he was a very practical playwright. So that should count for something. Acted it was, and with success enough for it to be presented before the king at Whitehall . . . And Burbage's performance of *King Lear* remained a vivid memory. At the Restoration it was one of the nine plays selected by Davenant for his theatre" (261). Later Granville- Barker adds that Lamb's essay "should be read as a whole", since "the theatre alternately delighted and exasperated him" (262).

In the twentieth century *King Lear* has been performed more often than it was at any other time since the Renaissance. The "very concept of royalty in the Western world," Foakes argues, "becomes increasingly hard to grasp, while at the same time a distrust of authority in all its forms becomes more widespread;" and if "an anxiety grows about a steadily aging population, the emphasis in productions of *King Lear* would inevitably reflect these changing conditions" (26). Recent productions have often set out to show the overwhelming pathos of an old man petted and humbled, disarmed and then restored to peace and gratitude. Lear as everyman in a modern world tends to be characterized as a victim of violent forces in an uncaring society rather than as an agent, an authoritarian monarch causing the violence that destroys him.

King Lear has always offered challenges to readers of all kinds: in the study, on the stage, and in the theatre audience. When we turn to actual productions of the play, we are able to notice that they represent paradigms for performance-oriented study and, collectively, a substantial exploration of the play as a whole. As seems obvious since acting became professional in late sixteenth century, a company's success depends on attracting audiences to a play and on pleasing them. In the twentieth century, as in previous ages, the staging of *King Lear* pretty much reflects the tenor of the times, while the perceived moral status of the characters and the emotions they are meant to evoke might change according to the singularities of a particular audience. The explanation must be that the subjects of *King Lear* reflect a universal tragedy. The play demands that the audience think about the horrifying image to which humanity can be reduced: at the end nobody escapes and punishment is indiscriminate. The few survivors face a hopeless future. Benedict Nightingale, while analysing some recent English productions of *King Lear*, observes that

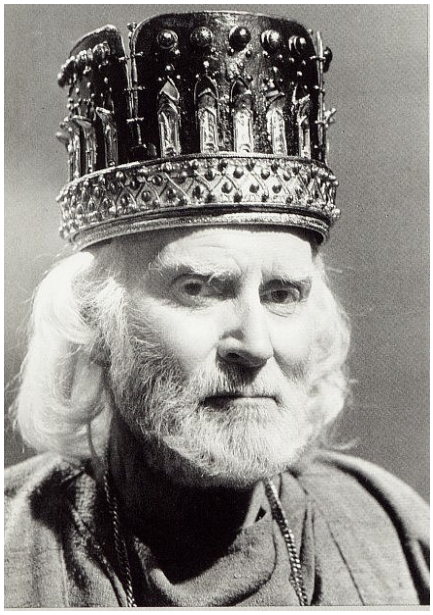
> There have been tyrannical Lears, vain and foolish Lears, spoiled-child Lears, senile Lears, and various combinations of these; but without exception or at least without exception among the productions reviewed by the national critics, they have implicitly asked the spectators a question. It is I suppose, one which reflects the temper of a generation increasingly ill at ease with class structures, traditional hierarchies, and established authority. (226-7)

John Gielgud as King Lear.

The period embracing the 1920's to the 1950's brought a fertile production of Shakespeare's plays, and Kenneth Muir brings evidence that "there have been several notable Lears, including Gielgud, Devlin, Wolfit, and Olivier" (xli), while Robert Wilcher selects and analyzes some notable productions of *King Lear*, most of them for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The selection starts with the 1959 production with Glen Byan Shaw as the director and a crownless Charles Laughton as *Lear,* while Ian Holmes performed the Fool. Peter Brook follows in 1962, with Paul Scofield as the King conducting a "joyless public ritual in which a large orb was placed in the hands of each daughter in turns as she repeated a formal expression of love to ratify the handing of power" (113). Twice is Adrian Noble included as a remarkable director in Wilcher's list, first for his 1982 production and second for the 1993 production, both performed at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, in Stratford-upon-Avon. According to Wilcher, "The overall impact of a production is often dependent upon the extent to which *Lear* makes progress towards greater insight and humanity" (118).

Regarded in this sense, the widely disseminated Shakespeare BBC television productions have provided ample material for study and invite a discussion of the commercial nature of television versus its social and cultural responsibility. The 1982-83 BBC/Granada Television production of Lawrence Olivier's *King Lear,* unlike other BBC productions, achieved considerable acclaim. Coincidently or not, it followed two highly praised film versions of *Lear:* Grígori Kozintsev's in 1970 and Peter Brook's in 1971. The television staged *Lears* were aimed at a more popular audience, but we may suppose, nonetheless, that many of those tuning in to *King Lear* would have some knowledge of or interest in Shakespeare. Regarded in this light, the televisioned *Lear* would not represent bringing Shakespeare to the masses. It would represent, instead, a somewhat different phenomenon:

giving a receptive audience the opportunity to experience something similar to live-staging Shakespeare. In retrospect, many contemporary English projects aimed at demystifying Shakespeare, bringing his plays to the level of a popular and commercial art via a variety of new venues and technology, have certainly provided a different approach that could not have been dreamed of in previous generations.



The 1982-83 BBC/ Granada Productions had Lawrence Olivier as King Lear

In exploring performances of *King Lear* which some deem unfaithful to Shakespeare, the study of twentieth-century stagings of the play shows that it is not possible to recreate the past, since a supposed fidelity to a Renaissance text does not generate past, and also because authenticity by definition exists in an unapproachable time, forever distant from the present moment. Nothing can restore Shakespeare to his Renaissance eminence. In considering the relationship between text and performance, then, we are, in effect, providing models that enable readers of Shakespeare to occupy their place within a critical audience. By transgressing the nostalgic reproduction of the text, the RSC can take a good deal (but surely not all) of the credit for some unconventional Shakespeare in our own age. The vitality of

Shakespeare's texts is celebrated as something which resists definition, and to confine the plays of such an author to a single permanent meaning is not only unnecessary but reductive; therefore, performance often emerges as a way to go back not to repeat the past but to rethink and reshape history on stage.

CHAPTER 2

SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE IN BRAZIL: *KING LEAR*

2.1 THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: JOÃO CAETANO

An introductory comment as regards the contents of this section is necessary, for in this chapter it is my intention to unfold the trajectory of *King Lear* in Brazil during the nineteenth century; however, according to my studies only few records of Shakespearean productions were documented, a fact that has rendered the research difficult. Since there is no evidence recalling representations of *King Lear* at that period of time, I will not be able to discuss it. I will, nevertheless, take into account what emerges from the bibliography that covers the history of the nineteenth-century theatre in Brazil, as regards Shakespeare.

I must first make what might seem a digression, but which is, I believe, crucial: the identification of overall historical, political, and social circumstances in order to find the interrelationship and dependency between them and finally try to justify and organize comments. When analyzing theatrical performances in Brazil in the nineteenth century, one cannot ignore the fact that although looking for a cultural identity, our society was distinguished by a heavy dependence upon European influences. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Portugal have, that staging in the colony could not be duly assessed without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by the rulers, being mostly a relationship of power. This is not to say that Portugal unilaterally determined what could be said or written, but to show that European culture was at that historical period the only reference known. The flow of information and communication between Europe and Brazil proved to be highly one-sided, an imbalance that perpetuated a pronounced Eurocentric perspective. However, due to an uneven intellectual exchange, theatre, ironically perhaps, could be considered the first attempt at an artistic expression, for since the sixteenth century

Portuguese Jesuits used to perform Biblical stories for the natives as an effort to convert them into Christianity.

Later on, during the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, Brazilian actors spontaneously started to emerge, a fact documented by travelers "who visited the country in the earliest period of our history" (Faria 19, my translation). [As most of the sources in this chapter were originally published in Brazilian Portuguese, I would like to mention that all translations into English, throughout this thesis, are my own.] That does not mean, though, that such dramatic representations could be called serious, in fact, they were mostly amateur performances, sporadic voices expressing emotions and feelings. To be sure, Faria suggests a link between literature and performance as a way to identify theatre as a more complex art form: "if we take into account the fact that theatre is an art form which requires the existence of playwrights, plays, actors and public, one can consider that only during the Romantic period of our literary life we effectively have theatre in Brazil" (19). In contrast, it is also true that the Romantic authors in our country, especially the ones from the first period, were not able to create a significant dramatic production. Granted few exceptions, continues Faria, as for instance Martins Pena and his comedies, Gonçalves Dias, and Álvares de Azevedo, not much is known about the previous theatrical history in Brazil, as regards Shakespearean productions, before the establishment of the Portuguese monarchy in our country.

Certainly of extreme importance is the arrival of the Portuguese Royal family in Brazil in 1808, which brought a series of cultural improvements, being one of those directed at the theatre. Dom João VI "moved from Portugal and established his Court in Rio de Janeiro, building there the first Theatre, [Teatro Real de São João] which replaced the small '*Casas de Ópera*'" (ibid 20), while the actors and good part of the public "were formed by expatriates

escaping from Napoleon's troops", and at the same time "most plays came from Portugal and were translated from French" (ibid.).

With established locations and casts, the theatrical activity became more continuous than in past eras. Furthermore, as a consequence of the nationalism and the cultural agitation that succeeded the independence, for a short period of time, there was an effort to replace foreign actors and companies with Brazilians. At some point in these efforts to produce changes, there was a noticeable attempt to spur a national theatre, with plays dealing with nationalistic issues. The first evidence of the struggle to perform plays with such characteristics was made by Gonçalves de Magalhães, who, according to Faria, was a pioneer, and *Antonio José* was "the first tragedy written by a Brazilian and the only one dealing with national issues" (32). Later Faria remarks that it is also important that Magalhães wrote a tragedy, a classical genre, and not a problem-play, "as might be expected from an author interested in introducing Romanticism in his country" (ibid).

At this historical period we have João Caetano, who, "despite having against himself his [Brazilian] nationality" (Moreira de Azevedo qtd in Prado 10), is still unanimously considered "the most important actor in the nineteenth century" (Faria 20). In fact, if Caetano is sometimes criticized for not having privileged any of his contemporary Brazilian authors, almost always preferring European translations, his vast experience allied to the conditions of staging enriched his original style, allowing him to publish two books on the art of performing. In 1837 he published *Reflexões Dramáticas*, in which "he tried to teach the Brazilian actors some basic notions such as how to die in a scene or how to move gracefully" (Faria 58). However, it is only in 1862, as a celebrated actor that he publishes his more important book, *Lições Dramáticas,* "not only to help those who were devoted to the dramatic career" but also

to show that he " was never unconcerned about the progress of the national theatre" (qtd. in Faria 58-59).

João Caetano

Caetano must have had considerable acting ability, as for instance, Faria refers to the actor's uniqueness in the history of Brazilian theatre: "a brilliant career, with innumerable successes and unforgettable interpretations" (58). As an actor "he was sensitive, emotional, explosive, given to unpredictable outbursts, and sometimes a genius" (ibid 62). Indeed, it is worth noting the many contradictions existing in the ideas he presents in *Lições Dramáticas,* as observed in the 'First Lesson,' when he asserts both that "a [good] interpretation should be balanced, natural" (ibid 59), and defends the actor's wild and aggressive way of performing. In 1832, during a representation of *Os Seis Degraus do Crime,* Caetano had an extraordinary outburst of jealousy and almost killed the Portuguese actress Estela Sezefreda. He later excused himself explaining that at that time he was 24 while the almost strangled lady was only 22, and it seemed that "his heart loved her much more as a woman than as an actress" (Prado 7).

For Eugênio Gomes, the first truly Brazilian theatrical company made its debut in Shakespeare in 1835, when a group of actors under the leadership of Caetano, and using French adaptations, performed the dramas *Os Túmulos de Verona ou Julieta e Romeu, Os Terríveis Efeitos do Ódio e da Vingança ou Julieta e Romeu,* and *Coriolano em Roma* (12).

João Caetano was at the same time a manager and a performer, "supporting during three decades the continuation of our theatrical life, always in unfavorable conditions, and with surprisingly high levels of achievement" (Prado, qtd. in Faria 58). Eugênio Gomes acknowledges the fact that Caetano almost single-handedly rescued Shakespeare from generations of neglect: "Shakespeare was indirectly introduced in Brazil through French adaptations" (13), and not surprisingly, "some of them brought by Portuguese actors" (13). The Ducis' version of *Othello,* translated into Portuguese by Gonçalves de Magalhães (Prado 24), was destined to be the actor's most performed role and one of his "greatest triumphs" (Gomes14).

As mentioned by Gomes, Caetano was first introduced to Ducis' versions while watching two Spanish companies touring in Rio de Janeiro, one of them being "Adolfo Ribelle's who in 1838 performed *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* and only the fourth and fifth acts of *Othello"* (14). Five years later, another company showed *Othello*, from the "same deplorable French source" (ibid). Although the first *Hamlet* performed by Caetano was not a French version but a translation from English, the majority of Shakespeare's plays arrived in Brazil after being shaped and adapted to the French stage by several hands. Suffice it to say for now that only one of these adapters, Jean François Ducis, who was continuously adopted by João Caetano, needs to be mentioned here. No doubt Caetano's admiration for Shakespeare was genuine, some of his critics blamed him of promoting Shakespeare while at the same time promoting himself and his company. Prado regrets that the profile of the actor should be

drawn mostly by the opinion of people who were not directly involved in theatrical activity, and the fact that some of the praises he repeatedly received were not always seriously considered: "different from what happens to the literary text or music, to a pictorial or architectonic work, we cannot see in the dramatic representation anything which has not been previously seen by his contemporaries" (108).

Simultaneously, however positive some of the opinions about Caetano might have been, some of the actor's contemporaries blamed him for his apparent disregard to engage into serious social and nationalistic issues. Araújo Porto-Alegre, very much aware of these circumstances, in a provocative article, would criticize Caetano as a great actor but a mediocre impresario, partly responsible for the stagnation of the national theatre, and easily flattered by false and unwise friends:

> Our actor is still young and has not yet lost the brilliant qualities by nature received; and personally does not have any reasons to complain about the public or the government, and can still produce gigantic steps on his art. [Directly addressing Caetano] Study, raise up the scene to a superior level which can be achieved; divorce from your unwise friends, put away the crowns they have repeatedly given to you and join the national literature, be one of its agents in the scene . . . and study and study . . . and we will be ready to praise and applaud you with all our heart, because your glory is also ours. (qtd. in Faria 56)

Despite the "glory" mentioned by Porto-Alegre, it seems that circumstances were not always easy for the Brazilian actor, and could largely be explained due to the fact that "neither was our theatre prepared to discharge the ultramarine collaboration, neither could the province substitute the court as a market" (Prado 10).

Only one Brazilian author had the privilege of having one of his plays performed by Caetano: "exactly the one who most praised him: Joaquim Manuel de Macedo" (Prado 129). Although it is not my interest to give emphasis to the political aspects of the nineteenth century in Brazil, I cannot ignore that art does not go divorced from social reality: the structure of the ruling class in possession of wealth, and therefore the public who used to go to the

theatre, certainly influenced Caetano's choices in producing Shakespearean adaptations. We have to remember that Brazil was not only dependent on Europe; it was also Portugal's richest colony. Today we know that if João Caetano did not perform plays by Brazilian authors, as complained by Porto-Alegre, it was probably due to the fact that such productions would almost invariably represent a commercial failure, a risk the actor might not have wanted to impose on himself and his troupe. If we try to situate Caetano's trajectory in the nineteenth-century Brazilian scenario, it is easy to notice that his attitude toward the emergent national writers raises problems that go far deeper than Porto-Alegre's simplistic point of view would suggest.

Machado de Assis, as cited in Faria, puts the blame of the deterioration of the Brazilian Theatre at the end of the nineteenth century on a series of factors, especially the absence of good actors and good plays that "have left the Brazilian theatre in profane and harmful hands" (111), a commentary that in Faria's opinion is probably addressed to João Caetano, who was the only actor who "never changed [despite being sometimes severely criticized] the repertoire of his company, or his style of interpretation" (111).

For Maria Helena Serôdio in *A Sedução dos Sentidos,* the actor's performance in a play must always be examined under a broad perspective, rather than only taking into account the empiric analysis of a given theatrical production (260). Also, there is the notion of "space", when commercial art, theatrical performances included, does not fit into the variables associated with public expectations. Again, in the nineteenth century the legacy of colonial values was still dominant, while strong European standards were at that period of our history unquestionable. Indeed, at the heart of the colony the perception of a national identity was only beginning, which explains why Shakespeare's plays were represented in Brazil as if the spectators of the performances were in France, or better, in Portugal. In short, the success of

any plays very much depended on the recognition that they resembled inherited models from Europe. Then we have to replace the idea of "nationalism", as claimed by Porto-Alegre, with that larger, less restrictive idea of collectivity, locating the individual story of Caetano in a fundamental relation to some larger experience. And it is under this elucidative bigger scope that some of the issues concerning the actor's choices and responses should be interpreted and commented.

The precarious balance between the desire for self-affirmation and an unequal power-relationship in a (post)colonial context is thus not likely to be resolved in the near future, as will be seen in the following pages. And yet, what still remains relevant is the fact that even if Caetano should be blamed for his apparent disregard for important Brazilian playwrights, by contrast, his efforts to run the very first Brazilian theatrical company should be acknowledged. It seems that Caetano's emblematic position in the history of the Brazilian theatre must have accomplished what nowadays represents a unique and personal technique in the production of theatrical drama, and "the key which opens the whole period of formation of our theatre, as seen from inside, from the stage" (Prado qtd. in Faria 58).

2.2 THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: EUROPEAN COMPANIES

Before moving on to situate Shakespearean performances in Brazil from the mid–1870's onwards, I wish to pause and again remember that they cannot be understood isolated from the cultural environment. It is particularly interesting to direct attention towards the Brazilian stage history, in order to make it clear that at that time success was associated with fantasies of European cultural superiority. To grasp the importance of such strong influence we have to think of Europe as the source of patterns of behavior, ideals, a certain worldview

to be followed by the bourgeoisie, and mostly as setting the principles under which art was judged. As indicated in the previous section, the situation for Brazilians who tried to survive producing theatre in the country was of desolation: except for João Caetano's company, destined to play for a few decades a brilliant part in the annals of our stage, as seen before, all the other important companies were from Europe. Although sometimes very limited in monetary resources, the European companies knew how to use "intentional special effects which tried to impress different audiences" (Gomes 19).

In 1871, an Italian company under the leadership of Ernesto Rossi, arrived in Rio de Janeiro with a repertoire of tragedies, advertising that some of the Shakespearean productions were "adapted for the 'modern theatre'"(ibid 19), in an obvious effort to give emphasis to certain scenes which created "special effects as for instance the funeral march at the cemetery scene in *Hamlet"* (ibid.). However, despite being preceded by considerable fame and recognition, Rossi was unable to attract a great public who would rather attend burlesque performances at the Alcazar Lyrique (Gomes 18), leaving the Shakespearean versions a small attendance.

A different reception was provided for Salvini, who, being considered superior to Rossi, reached Rio de Janeiro in the same year. His performances of *Othello* and *Hamlet* were acclaimed as superb by critics and audiences. Foakes mentions that Salvini, who succeeded Edwin Forrest in New York, was in fact one of the greatest actors at the time, and "with his penchant for realism emphasized the human attributes of old man" (The Arden 23-24). Not surprisingly perhaps, the fact that Salvini used to say his lines in Italian, while the rest of the cast recited in English, always added a hint of originality to his performances. When in the United States, performing *Othello,* he was compared by Henry James to Garrick, the great English actor. Salvini would return to our country in 1879, with a large selection of

Shakespearean dramas, as for instance *Othello, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard III, Coriolanus, The Merchant of Venice,* and finally *King Lear.* Some other Italian companies would follow, perhaps attracted by a flourishing Italian colony in São Paulo, and also by the students, who started to be considered an important part of the audience (id 20).

Later Gomes remarks that the introduction of the theatre of Shakespeare in our country through those two Italians "served to reveal the magnificence of their theatre to the New World, while at the same time definitely destroying the intrusion of the French imitations" (20). As it turned out, from 1871 to the end of the century the country was visited by eight Italian companies during ten seasons, Shakespeare being included in all of them, as pointed by Gomes, adding that the fact has rendered "a wider knowledge of the English dramatist in our country" (21).

Surely the presence of foreign companies would bring as a consequence two different facts, observed by Faria, the first being the "extraordinary charm" added to the cultural life in Rio de Janeiro, since the public was always fascinated by the presence of European actors. The second one, not charming at all, was the complete collapse of the small Brazilian companies, not able to compete with the alien rivals. But where there was room for discontent there was also room for happiness. Briefing the facts, Joaquim Nabuco wrote an article in *O País,* reporting the deepest admiration Brazilians had for France, [and for the actress Sarah Bernhardt, one might add] and French values: "she will be acclaimed twice: because she comes first as Sarah Bernhardt, and then as France" (qtd. in Faria 182). Notwithstanding, in an article published in 1882 in the *Gazeta da Tarde,* Aluisio de Azevedo, disheartened with the situation, seems to propose a manifesto when he announces:

> [we] who do not have a national character, we who do not display science, neither art, nor literature. . . we represent ourselves in the theatre through magic and operetta. It is quite clear. Our ideal is *Maçã Encantada*, and *Orfeu na Roça*. For people like us, there is only one possible theatrical manifestation, which is the nonsense, the burlesque, the

> extreme ridiculous made of bright colors, strident sounds and old and garish jokes. (qtd. in Faria 168)

In fact the theatrical situation at the end of the nineteenth century is symbolic, reiterating the stagnation reflected in the arts in general. Also the two above mentioned eloquent opinions can at the same time intrigue and surprise, as indicators of a widely different range of reactions to the same issue. And it is interesting and ironic that for the brothers Azevedo, themselves playwrights and spirited supporters of the national theatre in Brazil, drama was only seriously considered if the authors were "Shakespeares or Molières, and our actresses Sarahs and Duses" (qtd.in Faria 186).

It is worth quoting José Veríssimo, as cited in Faria, who wrote an analysis of the Brazilian theatre as it was perceived by him at the end of the nineteenth century (1894):

> The upper classes, if we can call them so, or better, using the English expression, the *high life,* do not attend a theatrical performance unless there is a foreign actor who was previously advertised by the press, and who will inevitably speak in a language and express feelings that are unknown by most of the same public. As Brazil is 'an essentially agricultural country' and the population of the capital appreciates musical entertainment, a lyric company every now and then, with an expensive foreign company — that is essential, it must be expensive — will do to satisfy all their immediate artistic pleasures. (636)

By directing attention towards the trajectory of Brazilian plays and players, Faria also refers to an episode when the emperor abruptly left the theatre during a presentation of *Flor – de-Lis*, a comedy written by the brothers Azevedo. The greatest irony, says Faria, is that the fact was probably due to a migraine, which affected D.Pedro II regularly, and not because he was not amused by the play. Whatever the reason, *Flor-de-Lis* was severely attacked by the press, which accused the Azevedos of "exaggerating in immoral scenes" (ibid 168).

As stated before, performance only exists in a moment of history, and one could add that every moment is governed by the taste and sensitivity of a period, and the different examples commented on here confirm this. It is clear that the assumptions and expectations

embedded in the nineteenth century established the modes in which dramatic representations functioned. Also, given the fact that the loudest and most persuasive voices in the business were at that time (and now) the critics, the public tended to endorse the prevailing opinion by diverting attention from one play to engage into another — probably European — production.

2.3 THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: "O TEATRO DO ESTUDANTE DO BRASIL"

Up to this point I have reviewed the historical context in which the apparent neglect of Brazilian companies seemed to be irrecoverable. Here, it could also be argued that because European influences were so dominant during the previous century, we could plausibly provide a framework in which two apparently conflicting issues would emerge: the first one is that due to the lack of a Brazilian theatrical tradition for such a long time, the fact could in contrast be assumed as natural. The second, to keep the distinction straight, would stress the desire to recover a truly national theatre, which, if not entirely ignored, as seen previously, at least was buried under years of a Eurocentric model. Also, when Brazilian companies attempted to present Shakespeare translated into Portuguese, giving to the words meanings or cultural signifiers, they inevitably created a different product. They were not only keen to learn about the cultural productions of Europe, but also sought for cultural exchanges, a balanced communication that equally could take into account Brazilians as well as Europeans as producers of culture. Gomes remarks that

> Except for a few and distinctive cases, all the Shakespearean plays translated into our language are deplorably imperfect. Some among them were even translations from French translations and, unfortunately, not always accurately translated. They are recognizable by the same deficient result: they were all made to [quickly] fit the market. (67)

As Susan Bennett points out, we "should not talk of theatre as an art forming isolation from cultural practice" (*Theatre Audiences* 99), and as an illustration "audiences are at best 'fascinated' with performances that do not fall into their cultural experience" (103). However, as art cannot always be conceived as a repetition of the realities of foreign countries, it is not surprising that the excessive idolatry of alien values finally provoked a great impact on those set ideas. Under the influence of the Semana da Arte Moderna, Álvaro Moreira produced *Adão, Eva e Outros Membros da Família* having two marginal characters, a thief and a beggar performing the main roles. In their isolation Moreira's characters may well have served as an attempt to show concerns and frustrations, and more interestingly, to create the illusion that the audience should sometimes be confronted by the socially and economically diverse elements.

After all, it is possible to date the beginning of the modern age of Brazilian drama quite precisely: with the advent of the Teatro do Estudante do Brasil, conceived and directed by Paschoal Carlos Magno, in 1938 we have the most successful example of a serious amateur group. Being not only a diplomat, but at the same time an erudite in Shakespearean studies, Magno was acclaimed with "a strong interest manifested by the public and the press" (Gomes 24), which encouraged him to proceed on his purposes concerning the Shakespearean world. With a cast consisting mostly of students, the Teatro do Estudante formed a strong circle responding to the public with multiple productions of Shakespeare's plays translated from English by Brazilians. The French adaptations and other concepts manifested by previous European companies were this time discharged. The première production was *Romeu e Julieta,* directed by Itália Fausta and performed by Paulo Porto and Sonia Oiticica, under the support of the Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura Inglesa. Gomes considers that the effect of accomplishment was so strong, due mostly to the positive reaction of the audience, that with

slight changes in the cast, *Romeu e Julieta* was performed again in 1941 and in 1945. Gomes also argues that the years immediately following marked an alternative and positive influence of the Teatro do Estudante do Brasil, since many other productions would be offered to the public, as for instance, at the end of 1946, the Teatro Experimental do Negro performed *Otelo,* act 5, scene 2 in a translation of José Carlos Lisboa (Gomes 26). Abdias Nascimento and Cacilda Becker, respectively performing Otelo and Desdemona, were at that time renowned professionals, having both started their careers in Magno's original group.

Gomes considers that the echoes and effects launched by the Teatro do Estudante resonated in startling new ways with contemporary social and political concerns, especially to support a critical discourse among academics and artists: in 1944 a group of journalists, directors and actors discussed some problematic issues detected in *Hamlet,* drawing their conclusions based on a study published by Barbara Heleodora Carneiro de Mendonça dealing with the play. Later, in 1949, the Festival Shakespeare in Rio was a success, being preceded in the previous year by a series of performances of *Hamlet*, revealing Sergio Cardoso, destined to be the first stage actor to become a famous soap opera star.

In part, of course, it can be argued that the contradictions experienced in the Teatro do Estudante do Brasil, "which apart from Paschoal Carlos Magno, had the performances staged-oriented under multiple guidances" (id 27), were sometimes stressed by the tensions of a society in transition, but, on the other hand, what needs emphasizing here is Magno's sincere effort to rescue Shakespeare from years of neglect, and the effect of the plays on the audience, as a movement towards reconciliation. Magno's intention was, I believe, to create a serious theatre for the mid-1900s and, at the same time, to push the Shakespearean texts forward, both supplying the market with actors and the audience with a classic interpretative process, the process of looking at texts as at once fascinating and meaningful. So far I have considered, in

general terms, an important change in theatrical performances and also a significant rediscovery of Shakespeare's plays. In regard to the latter, Magno has achieved his goals and his influence was unequivocally positive.

2.4 A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH: SOME RECENT PRODUCTIONS IN BRAZIL

. . . we must obey; speak what we feel, not what we ought to say. . .(*King Lear* 5, 3, 323-4)

Often, the definition of research strategies and methods, as much as the diligent collecting and gathering of data, are a preliminary operation one must perform in order to carry out a comparative investigation. The previous incursion into Shakespearean plays in England and in Brazil must here remain quite pragmatic and simplified, yet suffice as a background context. It is also expected that a study on Shakespearean performance must be preceded by a historical survey which will finally lead to what matters: the attempt to understand a play like *King Lear* by means of the examination of samplings of several productions revealing some of the multiple theatrical possibilities inscribed in the text. Writing about Shakespearean performances in the late twentieth century makes objective judgment more difficult than writing about any other period, for we are too close to them.

I want in this section to consider, so far as possible, aspects of *King Lear* as understood by the director, audience and the critics. The lines serving as an epigraph to this section, spoken by Edgar in the Folio and by Albany in the Quarto, seem to appeal to a general principle which covers too much ground; the connection between feelings and duties sometimes also points to a central comment: there is always an antagonism, plurality of voices in unresolved collisions. *King Lear* can then be read as a discourse denying a single and

unitary interpretation. *King Lear* is a play that deconstructs itself repeatedly, and if we are left with any moral certainty at the end of the drama, it derives from Edgar´s final speech, which can become the ultimate comment on the play.

I also have considered the fact that compared with later conventions of stage-setting, specific geographical and historical locations in plays are always a matter of importance, determining influence on their dramatic structure and theatrical rhythm. At a certain level, such relations in a given historical moment will operate changes in the way one analyzes the production, for the varying degrees of discourse sometimes reflect the dominant culture and its institutions, as will appear in some of the contemporary Brazilian productions.

In exploring Brazilian performances of *King Lear* during the 1970's one cannot avoid mentioning the Pueblo, a politically committed group, which used experimentation with improvisation and issues of gender relations. The production of *King Lear* (1975) by this group (see discussion following) exemplifies the attempt made by its director, Maria Tereza do Amaral, to accomplish a critical and hostile reaction confronting the country's political *status quo.* Its almost absence of costumes was mostly due to the lack of any governmental and private funds to support such an alternative production. In contrast, in an age of visual culture like ours, it is important to remember that clothes are emblematic to reveal signs of cultural contexts, and to enable the audience's immediate recognition of the meaning attached to a particular costume, sometimes replacing verbal cues. As seen in previous paragraphs, it is not uncommon that cultural practices use the authority of Shakespeare to lodge critical discourses and to think of the audience as a community of heterogeneous spectators who individually and collectively participate in the process. As has been argued, in giving theatrical form to the language of the play, however, production also enriches it, especially when director and troupe let words and acting set the imaginary universe for the audience.

However, it is important to note that theatre, as a social practice, is inevitably associated with constructions of reality which often serve the interests of particular ideological and political positions. Indeed, in many cases, to place the performance within a specific geographical position means understanding drama, not as a passive reflector of great ideas, but as a site of social awareness. As Aimara da Cunha Resende reminds us: "The very act of choosing the work to be translated already embodies artistic, sociological, political, individual values that point towards the culture in which the translator, not the author translated, has been nurtured" (237-238). One of the results of this social awareness in a play like *King Lear* is that the audience is forced to dive in its fiction with the same intensity Shakespeare's contemporaries did, since the dramatic effects are more easily (re)produced.

It is based on the alternative premise that the written Shakespearean play can work as a collaborative medium of theatrical presentation, since both are components of a larger process, that I intend to analyze the Brazilian productions in the remaining section of this chapter. As stated by Herbert Blau:

> I tried to show. . . How thinking, in my own work, recycles itself between the illusions of theater and the realities of the world, the realities of the world and the illusions of theater, arriving at a kind of theater whose express subject is the *dis*appearance of theater; that is, the appearances from which theater is made and upon which it reflects are conceptually elaborated and in turn reflected upon until there is a denial, or refusal, by means of theater of the distressing and maybe crippling notion that in life there is nothing but theater. (qtd. in Bennett 113)

Moreover, certain present practices, as demonstrated by some particular valuable productions of *King Lear* in Brazil, deserve our attention in order to understand how a Shakespearean play reveals a plurality of contemporary discourses, showing a number of possibilities merely glanced at and sometimes hidden from a distracted viewer. Theatrical representation creates signification primarily through dialogue, not through explicit or implied linearity, with actors as well as members of the audience functioning as a collective unit. In

other words, audience, whether in Shakespeare's times or ours, remains the most elusive component in the shaping of a performance text, raising questions that cannot be ignored, since different from a written text, there is not always the possibility to return to it later, as the dramatist did. What characterizes, hence, a production, is the presence of available autonomous voices, according to an ideological scope mostly defined through the director's choices. Ron Daniels mentions that there is no other way to understand Shakespeare's plays, but in performing them, and this is also the method advocated by G. Wilson Knight in the preface of *The Wheels of Fire* (serving as a complementary support to the remark of the Brazilian director):

> . . . My own interest has always been Shakespeare in the theatre; and to that my written work has been, in my own mind, subsidiary. But my experience as actor, producer and play-goer leaves me uncompromising in my assertion that the literary analysis of great drama in terms of theatrical technique accomplishes singularly little. . . . The proper thing to do about a play's dramatic quality is to produce it, to act in it, to attend performances. (qtd in W.B. Worthen 61)

Now, there is no reason to think that my observations would be more valid or interesting if the author of the texts were our contemporary or died four hundred years ago, and it is based on these premises that the Brazilian productions of *King Lear* will be examined. I have selected the productions listed below mainly because they offer provocatively different interpretations. In order to be more specific, only productions that were commercially released and have been the object of critical analysis and reviews delivered mostly by the written media have been included in this chapter. As such, I have dealt with three Brazilian productions covering a period of twenty years, including Tereza Amaral's 1975, with Luiza Barreto Leite; Celso Nunes' 1983, with Sergio Britto; and finally Ulysses Cruz's 1996, with Paulo Autran. The fourth production, Ron Daniel's 2000, with Raul Cortez, will be the object of the next chapter.

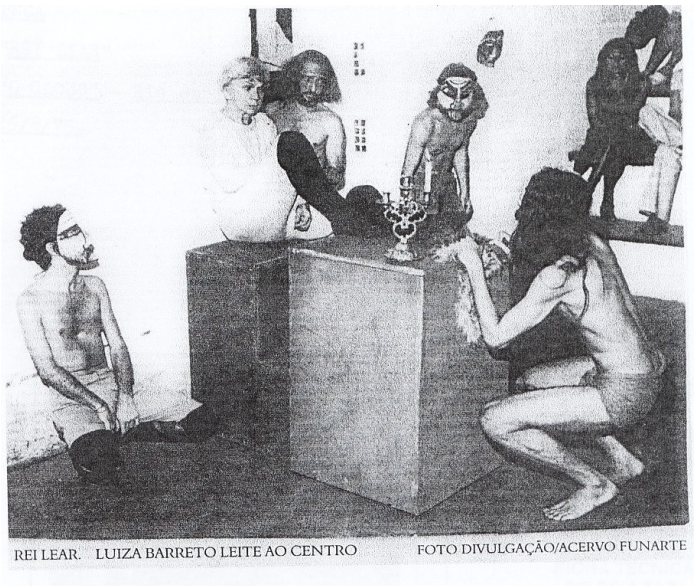
2.5 TEREZA AMARAL'S *REI LEAR* WITH LUIZA BARRETO LEITE: 1975

In 1975 Brazil was still under a military government, the intervention of the state was always present and a creative and free existence of art seemed to be almost impossible. Subsidies were cut to the bone, and the success or failure of a theatrical production could mean the difference between staying open and closing down completely. Even those which survived were forced to cut back on experiments and play safe trying to live on their box-office takings. But at the same time, as there seemed to be no "safe" way to organize and present a production, many theatres and companies, both small and large, died. The wide-spread anxieties shared by the dramatic community about the almost disappearance of theatrical performances was expressed mostly through metaphors. What is ironical, however, is the fact that censorship aroused originality springing out of an age of limbo, creating a phenomenon of first importance and developing a theatrical work of political character.

Assuming that literature and drama cannot exist outside ideology and history, I intend to investigate this specific production of *King Lear* connected to its political practice, in ways that contested any previous canonical reading of the play. To recognize the ideological dimensions of performance in the 1970's is to reduce theatre to its essentials, a notion which echoes the beginning of Peter Brook´s *The Empty Space,* when he states: "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged" (97).

The Brazilian production of *Rei Lear* in 1975, under the direction of Maria Tereza do Amaral and having Luiza Barreto Leite performing the main role, represented a phase of daring approach that lives up to Brook's statement. A new relation with space and with the public reflected the entry of Brazilian theatre into a work of political character. Amaral

remarks that Pueblo, at that time an experimental group in Rio de Janeiro, from which came most of the cast for *Rei Lear,* was a troupe of actors sharing an unusual collaboration. In an unsigned article published by *O Globo* Amaral declared: "I intend to join the actors to the public as co-authors of direction . . . because for us the play is not the most important thing, but the fact that it was a communal work. . . We are a group that includes its public. . . . and we are also a group that includes its people" (7 Sept 1975). Despite her intentions, Amaral was not ready for the kind of collaboration she announced, as we will see later.



Rei Lear directed by
Maria Tereza Amaral

It should be said that the theatre space was small and, reporting to Brook's definition of theatre, if any place could be called a bare space, that was certainly the basement of Teatro Opinião in Rio de Janeiro. Hardly accommodating eight actors on stage and, according to Yan Michalski, not more than sixty "self-sacrificing spectators who exposed themselves to two hours and fifteen minutes of suffering" (*Jornal do Brasil* 2 Dec.1975) watching them, that rendering of *Rei Lear* ended up being responsible for the introduction of innovative elements in Brazilian drama.

Knowing that Maria Tereza do Amaral was never one to follow rules or formulae, it comes as no surprise that the director and the cast of eight bravely embarked on her own telling of *Rei Lear,* resulting in an unusual production with non-conventional sets, exploring a minimum of material resources, resorting to masks, and a maximum of the actor's own means, especially the body and voice. Under Amaral's direction, reinforcing alternative options for the main characters, the play was received with curiosity by the public and media. Men and women, including Luiza Barreto Leite as Lear, performed transvested, contributing to establish hints of ambiguity and homosexuality. In an unsigned interview released by *O Globo,* Luiza Barreto Leite declared that King Lear and Cordelia were the feminine characters of the play, and the oldest daughters were the ones to reveal the virile personality of the royal family: "In them [Regan and Goneril] we find strength, hardness and cruelty, which enables to power and corruption." As a result of these observations, and "since their characters were *obviously* male" she continues, "the *director* decided to shift the genres," which in her opinion made sense. Besides, "being the only woman on stage adds strength and personality to the King, also allowing the group to repeat a common practice at Shakespeare's time: men performing women's characters" (8 Aug. 1975).

At the same time, Amaral was also quite conscious of the fact that she was responsible for the final product and its ideological consequences. At the Fundação Nacional de Artes Cênicas in Rio de Janeiro I found a short memo, presumably sent to the actors, where she states: "either you like it, and then explanations are unnecessary, or you don't like it and then I would be justifying…" Furthermore, the director adds that she would have liked Shakespeare to be seen as "a friend of ours, author of the dialogues that should sooner be discussed than recited" (2).

The fact that *Rei Lear* was released during a period when people were not prepared for the innovations suggested by the production, when the predominantly conservative Brazilian culture was having difficulty coming to terms with non-conventional stagings, reveals as much about the critics as about the production. In fact *Rei Lear* is a play that deals with transition: its major characters are ambivalent and its meanings, as stated by many other directors before and after Amaral, might be pararadoxical. In other words, *Rei Lear* is characterized by ambivalences, conflicting values, multifaceted characters precisely because it is centered on the issues of social and cultural transition. A transition is a passage from a previous to a next stage, place, condition, social position or order, especially when the new replaces the older. Crucially, it is a passage during which the old no longer exists as it had been, while the new does not fully exist yet. Therefore, from a social and cultural standpoint, it is a moment during which the older structures and patterns of social organization, the older cultural values, beliefs and references are no longer in effect and the new ones have not been completely established. It is the moment in between two diverse social orders. Universally, these moments are socially ritualized. They have also characterized the liminal period as a moment in which society is at risk because its structures of ordering the world and its patterns of classification of people and events do not apply insofar as social hierarchies have been temporarily suspended.

In such a controversial historical period, when new social order had fiercely been imposed on our country, the decision to double crucial characters in *Rei Lear* might have served practical reasons and the fluidity of gender in Amaral's production unquestionably had its shock value. Moreover, the gender-bending had a particular force, and very much depended on the ability of a woman to perform a man like Lear, after all, serving nicely to remind us that Shakespeare's theatre is one in which women and men can be gendered entirely through performance. Indeed, in the Renaissance young men "became" women if they were dressed as

women. Whatever Amaral's intentions were, the polymorphous quality of the play's sexuality was always in evidence: Regan and Goneril performed by male actors, contrasted with Luiza's King Lear, even at their most farcical moments, had a powerful homoerotic charge. Apparently there was no crude and explicit playing of "feminine" behaviour by the men, or of "maleness" by the woman, but the audience of a small theatre like Porão-Opinião, perhaps inhibited by the intimacy of the situation, found themselves unable to react as expected by the director. Not surprisingly, given the themes and concerns of *Rei Lea*r, the production provoked a strong response from the reviews published mostly by the end of 1975, exposing both the director and the main actor to a public trial, as it were.

However we wish to gauge the social impact and the cultural significance, not the aesthetic merits of the production, we have to consent that it was far from being a popular success. In her inadequacy to articulate the play as expected by the media and the public, and having immediate social and political issues in mind, Tereza Amaral had to cope with harsh opinions. Reviews were almost uniformly negative, as for instance in *Jornal do Brasil* (2 Sep.1975) where Yan Michalski, in an article titled as "*O rei traído*", more in sorrow than in attack, mostly lamented Luiza Barreto's fortune, who should not have added her name to such "a marginal adaptation of *Rei Lear",* and also "the extraordinary incompetence and confused ideas that have always characterized the director did not deserve the physical presence of one of the most unanimously acclaimed personalities of our theatre". In contrast, odd as it might seem, *O Globo,* which is traditionally popular and far from revolutionary, clearly thought it was important to give *Rei Lear* its blessings. In two unsigned articles, titled "Rei Lear desce ao Porão" and "Sexo é psicologia no novo Rei Lear", the reviews were positive. Furthermore, it is important to remember that a "success" or a "failure" of a play was very tied to *O* Globo's opinion. We need to consider the obvious differences presented in the analysis of *Rei Lear* in

O Globo, if compared to the previous ones, especially the one signed by Michalsky. The main points of the *O* Globo's article, "Sexo é psicologia no novo Rei Lear", which was almost all written in the director's voice, state: "I like to see people pushed to their limits. I like to deal with what is mostly hidden. I like to throw the actors in places they wouldn't like to go. The public can feel it. They [the public] are fed up with the well-behaved theatre" (26 Aug. 1975). Fascinated by the possibilities offered by both doubling and gender crossing in Shakespearean theatre and summarizing the main points of her directions, she adds that she realized that "most of the times the real sex of the characters did not correspond to their anatomic sex", and stated that "having that defined, it was easy to determine each actor's role". The production reveals how hard it is to establish gender differences. In Amaral's version, male are clearly marginal and inferior to the female, displaying a violation in the traditionally gendered social order.

Luiza Barreto Leite as Rei Lear.

As for the use of masks "they symbolized the characters of the two older sisters' husbands" both being performed by Marcos de Assis, who was also the Fool. Later Amaral states that in her *Rei Lear* she has chosen to "give the play back to the people", but "unfortunately, people do not always know what to do and how to react to it, and neither does the critic". In simple terms she declared that she knew it would be difficult to produce Shakespeare, starting with the text, which in her opinion should be popular. "In short", Maria

Tereza added, “I’m not sure of what is going to happen. . . but of one thing I am absolutely sure: I will play with the audience’s limits.” (*O Globo* 7 Sep.1975) Indeed she did. And as we have read in the reviews, what should have led to a drama of great impact only achieved a critical and popular failure.

The second article, also published by *O Globo*, as we have seen, titled “Rei Lear desce ao porão”, clearly expresses Luiza’s doubts about the reception of the play:

> Maria Tereza translated the text, simplifying things to make everything easier to the public. I believe that the play deals with a current problem since we are now living in a period of transition. In such a period differences in genre do not mean much, for men or women face the world in a similar situation. Even though, to tell you the truth, I know I’m taking a risk. . . but my own way of risking life is acting. And performing is perhaps the best I can do. For me, *Rei Lear* can either be the swan’s song or the death of the old hen. (26 Aug. 1975)

Although Luiza Barreto Leite was able to shape her acting persona into a key element of this 1975 production, she was perceived as representing excess. That reminds us how thin the line between comedy and tragedy is, and how close Amaral’s *Rei Lear* actually came to inflict some serious harm upon its main actor. In this context, when existing authority so clearly determines what will count as truth, Luiza Leite in the main role, was viewed as someone whose acting was far from acceptable or at least undesirable under the social and historical circumstances. That the actor, nonetheless, received the attention she did, being sometimes conveniently “excused” of the excess, is partly due to the privileged position she continued to hold in the Brazilian imagination and partly to the peculiarities of the production itself. On the whole, however, the reviews received the production as a failure that the critical community did not want to take seriously. Indeed, as the sixty-four- year-old performer wisely foresaw, she was judged according to a fairly narrow standard and, after *Rei Lear*, she was eventually forgotten by the press, which sadly ceased to regard her seriously as an actor.

2.6 CELSO NUNES' *REI LEAR* WITH SÉRGIO BRITTO: 1983

In discussing any stage production we are faced with the overall question of viewing it as a whole or as an actor's interpretation, but whatever the choice might be it will inevitably invite comparisons. Sergio Britto, recognized as one of the greatest contemporary Brazilian actors, and Celso Nunes went into the market of theatrical production in 1983 well prepared to embrace success, both in terms of audience prestige and of profit. In fact, the production was sponsored by the Shell Company, and later awarded three different governmental prizes. We may suppose, nonetheless, that all the adverts were made as an effort of the sponsors to attract educated, upper-middle-class households with a preexisting interest in "culture." Besides, Celso Nunes, similar to the director of the Porão production, a professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, had also taken a degree in Drama at the Universidade Federal de São Paulo. The difference, however, was that, due to commercial involvements, Nunes tried to make *Rei Lear* acceptable to as wide an audience as possible. Regarded in this light, the production of *Rei Lear* did not precisely bring a revolutionary version of Shakespeare to the oppressed masses, as had happened in 1975. It represented, instead, a somewhat different phenomenon: giving the Brazilian public the opportunity to experience something like the cultural variety then available in the urban centers of the country.

Examining the publicity that surrounded this production serves in part to affirm the interest associated with the release of yet another Brazilian production of *Rei Lear,* this time translated by Millôr Fernandes, and being performed by a cast of well known actors from television, adding a strong element of popularity (see Appendix B). *Rei Lear* was advertised with an image based on Britto's popularity and also suggesting a wide variety of television references. Different from Amaral's production, Nunes' *Lear* was self-conscious of the

audience and was performed having one eye on what could achieve popular success, discharging verbal and emotionally complex elements, since the political aspect of the play was not the director's main concern. It might be observed that the production also started from what might seem a position of strength, since Shakespeare was designed, as we will see later, to be coherent and intelligible to audiences. So far as audience reaction was a main concern, with playgoers being offered, as promised by the director, the same recipe used on TV soap operas, the public should be openly amused when attending *Rei Lear*. On the whole, the impact produced by the television-trained cast would be less evident than in the take-it-or-leave-it reverse-gendered 1975 production.

Sérgio Britto as King Lear

Nunes knew better than only exploit every metatheatrical reference, and when politics and psychology were present they were more implicit than explicit: "I am trying to make a production based only on the text and on the actor" he explains to Yan Michalski, from *Jornal do Brasil* (4 Oct. 1983). The director's accumulation of theatrical experience, with a number of forty nine productions, made him aware of the admirable reception received from both the media and the public: "In the play we have all the ingredients that, in the twentieth century,

resulted in radio soap operas or in Janete Clair's stories for the television," he declared to Norma Coury of *Veja* magazine (19 Oct. 1983).

Theatrical performances are, according to Frank Coppieters, "receptive processes, pre-activated by their anticipation" and "intelligibility and/or success of a particular performance will undoubtedly be determined on this basis" (qtd. in Bennett 112). Like the play itself, in theatrical business printed images are a form of communication that differ from one historical moment to another, just as they differ from one culture to another, very often generating positive or negative reactions from the public, even when only a few years separate them. Admittedly, however, there is the fact that every production introduces different conventions, enabling discussions and provoking various conclusions that can be analyzed and compared. The fact that Nunes received national media coverage, casting at the same time well-known actors, must have added to the success of the production, keeping its audience gripped on the play, since "the horizon(s) of expectations brought by an audience to the theatre are bound to interact with every aspect of the theatrical event" (Bennett 108).

In the case of Celso Nunes and Sérgio Britto's *Rei Lear*, with the whole cast invited to attend preparatory meetings, adding contributions to the final "product" provides a sharp contrast to the Porão-Opinião production that mostly carried only the director's protocol of intentions, leaving to the actors almost nothing but to follow it. It remains to be seen what means were employed for (in Britto's words) "making the utopia work." As mentioned before, the 1983 *Lear* began with a series of encounters which surely worked as an opportunity to create a bond among director, cast and media, since those meetings were also documented, with reviewers writing for potential purchasers of tickets. The result seemed to provide a swift and positive reaction from the public and the "pre-activated process," as stated by Coppieters, was broadly achieved. The choice of an early announcement of *Rei Lear* was used as a

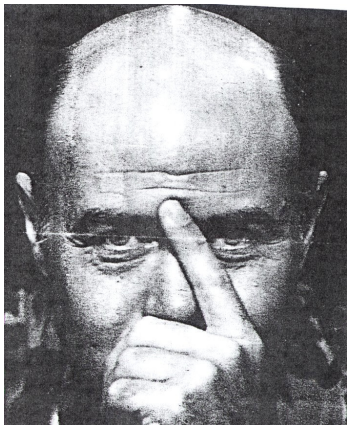
strategy for a good production-audience relationship. Alan C. Dessen argues that he has great respect for "how much [some] reviewers can accomplish in a short space and under a severe time limit" (236).

Clearly, in some instances Nunes' choices made a significant difference on the overall effect of the production, and the desire to translate Shakespeare into language that pertained to the twentieth century was a legitimate one. Different from the previously studied production, Nunes treated the play as a blending of discourses, a diversity of social speech types and individual voices, artistically organized. As stated by the director to Jotabê Medeiros in an article titled "Rei Lear, a lucidez pelo caminho da loucura":

> What opened way to the vision of the spectacle was my re-reading of Jan Kott's *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, which was later read by the whole cast. Kott analyses the differences and affinities between the tragic and the grotesque in the play; proving that *King Lear* is more readable in the twentieth century than at any other period, and makes a division between the popular burlesque, always present during the Elizabethan period — conspiracy, betrayals and murders — and the biblical themes, the Christian essence of the play. (*Jornal do Brasil* 4 Oct. 1983)

To demonstrate more dramatically the receptions of this *Rei Lear* in contrast with the previously studied production, I can do no better than check a review in *Veja* magazine covering two entire pages nicely designed. With many photographs and titled "As Loucuras do Poder," Norma Coury writes: "With almost four centuries, *Rei Lear* from Shakespeare arrives in Rio in a vigorous production". Still she continues, adding that "never before (sic) was the play produced in Brazil" and that "despite all the competition with some successful soap operas, in only two weeks the Shakespearean hero won an audience not used to going to the theatre just to listen to a powerful text." (*Veja* 19 Oct. 1983) Explaining the drastic cut he made in the play text, eliminating Kent's torture scene, Celso Nunes declared that the 1970's used up the possibilities of torture on the stage. Justifying his choice of Millôr Fernandes' "liberal" translation, he says that he wanted to break up with any "old-fashioned"

commitment to Shakespeare's texts. Not everybody of course applauded the innovation: some lines below, in the same article, Barbara Heliodora curtly stated to Coury that "Shakespeare must have known what he was doing." Similarly, in a visible effort to promote the production, Ana Maria Machado went even further in "Um Shakespeare que Funciona". Paraphrasing Orson Welles she wrote: "There are only two ways of performing Shakespeare: the way that works and the way that does not work. With Celso Nunes in *Rei Lear* it worked" (*Isto É* 26 Oct. 1983).



Celso Nunes

Rita Santilli, who was responsible for the executive production of the play, made observations during the three-month rehearsal period, and carefully watched discussions with actors and production personnel. Her considerations function as an excellent groundwork to develop an implied image of the play as a whole. Her written work, which started with the first meeting of the cast and ended with the opening night at Teatro Clara Nunes, was saved by the Fundação Nacional de Artes Cênicas, and will serve to explain the amount and kind of decisions that preceded the opening of the play. These texts, together with some information personally delivered by Sergio Britto, who performed the King, have helped me to construct a frame, an accumulation of reliable commentaries that complement the study of the production itself.

According to Santilli, the first encounter with the cast and director happened on July 9th 1983, and issues concerning madness, power, music, emotions, and scenery, (among others), were discussed. Many meetings, at different venues, would follow until the last rehearsal on October 3rd, preceding the opening night on Wednesday, October 5th, offering an ample coverage of performance decisions.

By all accounts it seems to be profitable to bring the production back to its originary point, which at the same time serves to illustrate Nunes' methods of creation in *Rei Lear*. Through Santilli's observations we see how, right from the very first meetings, the director used his cast selectively, with actors coming from Globo television, being Sérgio Britto and Ariclê Perez the only outsiders. Needless to say that all the publicity surrounding the production was almost entirely released by Globo network. Thus, the ability to create interest in the production based on its cast won audience favour easily. To *Veja* Nunes declared that he wanted to attract a public addicted to what he called television's "low definition naturalism." (19 Oct. 1983) Indeed, almost all of the cast could also be seen daily on the television screen.

Having very clear ideas about the characters in relation to their costumes, Nunes decided that the colours should add a strong suggestion and a discernible effect throughout the play, capable of giving the fullest expression to the characters. The King and the Fool, for instance,should, in the director's opinion, wear the same colour of clothes, almost the same costumes, being their most noticeable difference the crown, which in the Fool was smaller. The same happened with the older sisters, always in red, brown and gold, with connotations of mystery, blood, and darkness. In contrast, Cordelia, performed by a very young Fernanda Torres, had her costumes in shades of white and beige. During the rehearsals, justifying the use of textures and colours, Nunes also remarks on the "social function or, better, the

stereotype suggested by each character, which should always be represented by the costumes."

However confident the director seemed to be in his choices, reviewers were not at all favorable to his costume design, describing it as inadequate. In "Tragédia da ambição" Macksen Luiz, the reviewer for *Jornal do Brasil*, commented especially on the bold use of colours and the visual effects in the production:

> The production carries some serious problems, especially when it comes to its visual effects. The scenery — a stage covered with plastic strips and movable screens that recreate walls, battles and palaces,— would be adequate if served only as an indefinite purpose. However, being as it is, the bold and dramatic brown used as a backstage badly contrasts with such an ordinary material as the plastic strips. . . . Also the costumes, despite being well tailored, have an excess of textures, without any expressive result. Even exaggerations as the use of *bleu, blank* and *rouge,* suggesting the King of France, would not be so bold if at least one could be able to perceive any stylistic intention (6 Oct. 1983).

Since the events of *King Lear* are located on the unspecified period of history, Nunes decided to produce an unsettling experience, refashioning and examining the play in a cultural and symbolic process; according to the director's words: "it is not our intention to locate the production in the period previously planned by the author" (Santilli's notes). Then, the fact that we are dealing with a production that kept the approach through character analysis alive will enable some conclusions. Occasionally, Celso Nunes had the ability to fill the play with scores of characters, each of whom speaks in a language and acts in a way that indicates a sharply focused individual personality with a particular response to the stage experience. "The characters must be supported by strong actors," Nunes remarks, "and gestures must be harsh, with focused eyes and convincing voices. They have to search for something loud and violent." During three months of rehearsals the cast had their chance to redefine roles. According to Santillis observations, Nunes always shared the decisions made: "Shakespeare

works through confrontation, the word is explored together with light, colour and body. That creates rhythm," he repeatedly pointed out during the rehearsals.

As a choice for Sergio Britto, *Rei Lear* was full of pitfalls, especially because Nunes practiced some stunt casting, mixing experienced stage actors, like Britto himself, with some popular television actors of relatively limited stage experience. In fact, only Ariclê Perez performing Regana, Abrahão Farc as Gloucester, and Sérgio Britto did not belong to the permanent cast of Rede Globo. The result might have been gloriously satisfying (however not for a long period of time) to attract the audience's attention always eager for what Nunes called "low definition naturalism" (*Veja* 19 Oct. 1983), but fell short in many other circumstances. Ney Latorraca performing Edmund seemed to compete with the main actor, "a chance I was not willing to give him" confessed Sérgio Britto in a personal interview given to the author of this thesis in June 2002. Perhaps inevitably, after some weeks, the production was not reviewed as much as it was expected to. In an interview to Flavio Marinho, from *O Globo*, Britto declared himself disappointed by the circumstances: "we are in a period of violent crisis," but "at the same time," he added, complaining about the small interest manifested by the press after only two months after the opening night, "the media should not be saving words. The space dedicated to the production is relatively insignificant." In an obvious reference to Macksen Luiz from *Jornal do Brasil*, he remarks: "And at the same time, a bad review can destroy an actor's career. To destroy an actor's performance with a single word is cruel." When asked about the direction, appropriately enough, Britto answers that if Nunes' direction was sometimes considered controversial, that is quite a natural result after any Shakespearean production: "Nunes' direction was and still is questionable, but as in any Shakespearean production, especially *King Lear* which is so controversial, disagreements are always expected." He ended the interview with a hint of melancholy:

> Some may say that we should have invested our talents performing a Brazilian author. The Teatro dos Quatro is always trying to promote Brazilian plays . . . In my opinion quality is what really counts. And what we need is enough space to manifest ourselves. . . After all it is a Shakespearean text, (the production) has a great cast and is performed in a very comfortable theatre. It has everything to be something of fantastic popular prestige. But at least, and I have to acknowledge the fact, even when the theatre is not full, we always have an enthusiastic reaction from the public. (*Jornal do Brasil* 4 Jan. 1984)

2.7 ULYSSES CRUZ'S *REI LEAR* WITH PAULO AUTRAN: 1996

Examining a somewhat different method to produce a play, let us look at Paulo Autran's/Ulysses Cruz's *Rei Lear.* This production's greatest strength was the presence of Paulo Autran and clearly represented *his* approach, creating a theatrical event while interpreting a Shakespearean text. Unlike the two previously studied productions, being the first a director's production and the second a more commercial one, this is clearly a rather different mode. Autran had always a good support from the media, which started to announce his intentions months before the premiére, giving the public a clue of what his plans were. Being a highly intelligent actor and manager, Autran explained the play to the press both visually and textually in a way that enhanced, in advance to the first box office sale, an element of reflection, forcing the audience's early interest. This strategy gave the production a vigour that certainly also helped to attract financial support. The 1996 super-production's budget was estimated in one million reais, counting on a very strong support from a bank, Banco Real and some other private institutions.

In November 1995, months before the first rehearsal of *Rei Lear* started, Jotabê Medeiros, from *Jornal do Brasil* , announced Autran's intentions to produce the play: "Paulo Autran, who has always been considered our Shakespearean actor. . . says that people are now asking him to perform *Rei Lear"*. According to Medeiros, Autran decided to travel to Paris in order to meet the French director Patrice Chéreau, who, in the actor's opinion, was one of the

very few capable of giving all the emotion and modernity the play requires. Before turning to the French director, Autran had already decided on some names to join him in *Rei Lear,* including young actors from *A Tempestade* and *Péricles*, productions directed by Ulysses Cruz. Usually the choice for the cast is one of the director's duties, something that did not entirely happen with this production, however. So at ease was Autran in his artistic control, that he allowed himself to go further and act as if he were the director. To understand such an unusual contribution, we should rather turn to Halio, when he argues that ". . . it is the actors' job to keep the production coherent, even as it continue to evolve from performance to performance" (Understanding 74).

As his first choice of the French director was ill and unable to travel, Autran decided to invite a young Brazilian, as declared to Márcia Feijó: "I had received many messages from Ulysses Cruz, so, I made up my mind and decided to invite him" (*Diário Catarinense* 20 June 1996). To Jotabê Medeiros, Cruz declared himself extremely happy: "It would be simply wonderful to work with one of the greatest actors in the whole history of the Brazilian theatre," says the director who was just coming from directing *Péricles* with a cast of young and inexperienced actors. Ulysses had also directed a controversial gay play, *O Melhor do Homem,* and "his approach to this homosexual drama cost him the censorship from Teatro Hilton which decided to close its doors to such a daring production" (*Jornal do Brasil* 23 Dec.1995).

Paulo Autran being applauded as Rei Lear.

Autran's lifelong alliance with Shakespeare's plays reflects well his awareness of a potential market to be explored. A production like *Rei Lear*, performed to a contemporary audience, has always to adjust the text to the target audience, and Marcos Daud's version, being more contemporary than Barbara Heliodora's, for example, and more colloquial than Millôr Fernandes', helped to "make Shakespeare more accessible to the public," declares Ulysses Cruz to Cristina Ramalho, from *O Globo*. "And we also reduced the play to only two hours and twenty minutes, with a convenient intermission of twelve minutes." In a more reflexive moment he promises that "this time it [the production] will not be boring" (24 April 1996).

Pa

Having produced and performed *Othello, Coriolanus, Macbeth* and an enthusiastic Prospero in *The Tempest* staged by an amateur group from Londrina, Autran both promoted Shakespeare as a cultural value and as a means of transforming or promoting his own career and distinctive image. To Mauro Ferreira from *O Globo*, Autran declared that he could not wait to perform *Lear:* "It requires a lot of energy. I feel that this is the right time for me. I am doing *Lear* also because it has not been much performed on the Brazilian stage. Also, there is no mature theatrical actor who has never wanted to perform this great character" (7 March 1996).

Shakespeare can be seen as an element in all of Autran's work, an influence he uses particularly as a performer and a public personality. At the same time, Autran's choice of particular plays and the manner in which he reconstructed them can be seen as an expression of his politics and social beliefs. This is not entirely a matter of ego, though ego undeniably plays a part, but performing Shakespeare for most of the Brazilian actors is a way of calling attention to his own virtuosity and talent. Clara Góes, for instance, amplified her opinion (giving also voice to the audience) about Autran's performance: " I saw *Rei Lear* with Paulo

Autran. I could have written just this sentence and that would be enough. . .” and continues “That body with gray hair that was applauded just because of his presence on stage. . .” and more “And in the middle of the tempest and all the special effects. . . the man supporting the scene, carrying life and madness on his shoulders. . . the actor was there” (*O Globo* 26 May 1996).

Paulo Autran, in short, was a strong presence in the Brazilian culture of the 1990’s (and before) and the ambivalence with which Shakespeare and the actor were so frequently surrounded turned the show into a box-office success (though not for a long period of time) and a cultural commodity of some note. Autran would also present himself as a commentator on Shakespeare’s plays: “Lear is a character of great complexity,” he declared to Mauro Ferreira, from *O Globo* (7 March 1996), “… dealing with the moral decadence of a family and the greed showed by his older daughters. The more I study him the more I see it has no ending. I love the play just for that”.

One way of suggesting the impulses guiding Autran’s “cultural” interests would be to look at the reasons he most seriously considered during his first weeks of rehearsals: “I am doing *Rei Lear* because the play is essential and almost absent from Brazilian stages, especially in São Paulo. The play is unanimously considered Shakespeare’s greatest tragedy and has hardly ever been performed on our stages” (*O Globo* 7 March 1996). For unknown reasons he forgot to mention Britto’s production, (and Leite’s) also acclaimed by some of the critics as one of the most important contemporary Shakespearean releases. Although Autran appears to have been misinformed on this point, we have to consider the fact that relationship between actors are sometimes complex and tense, to say the least. Thus, we can hardly be surprised when Autran incidentally “forgets” to acknowledge a production successfully released a few years before his own staging.

Many reviews appeared setting the tone for the general reception of the play, especially in newspapers from Rio and São Paulo. As has been seen, an early and optimistic vision of the show was delivered by most of the *O Globo*'s reviewers developing an ambitious plan to give an opening pre-credit to the production. *O Globo* was, in fact, well prepared to embrace Autran's *Rei Lear* with enthusiasm, providing releases that highly praised both actor and director, such as the one released on 24 April 1996 and entitled "Ator elogia o diretor e considera a produção vibrante e violenta". The chief advantage of the language of praise is that it allows the public and potential audience to create a positive expectation for the theatrical event. However, productions early announced — and praised — by the press do not always deliver what has been promised, and good expectations can sometimes be modified by the same press. For instance, *Jornal do Brasil*'s coverage signed by Macksen Luiz helps to identify the major issues that would define the final discourse surrounding Autran's production, since it was delivered only one day prior to its last presentation in Rio de Janeiro, at Teatro João Caetano. Generally speaking, however, objections were clearly representing the reviewer's point of view. According to Macksen Luiz there were some technical ineptitudes that partly damaged the production. From the previously studied production, however, we have learned that this reviewer is an expert at consistently pointing out flaws and what he calls the lack of technical competence. The following paragraph, originally written in Portuguese, is worth quoting, since it supports the critic's view of the production:

> *Rei Lear* is on stage only until tomorrow . . . Ulysses Cruz dares bravely to transpose the play to the stage using a very vibrant rhythm, risking to produce a venturesome narrative. . . All the scenery apparatus strangles the poetry of the text. But this seemed to be the director's intentions, preferring an easy interaction with the audience, producing a visually impressive show, than any careful attention to the text. In this sense, the stage reflects an anti-detailed performance, almost a panel of firework effects. Paulo Autran is a less solemn *Lear,* projecting only the exterior of the character. The subtlety of *Lear*, especially the scenes when the king loses his mental sanity, is supported more by physical actions than by thoughtfulness. Whatever the director's intentions were, giving a less tragic character to *Lear*, a vigorous and

> sometimes acrobatic Autran with scenic authority and presence never failed to interact with the audience. (*Jornal do Brasil* 26 May 1996)

Another brief look at how Macksen Luiz continues reviewing the play and the remaining actors reveals that they were, in his opinion, too young and immature to perform *Lear*: "the whole cast suffers from the extreme youth of most of the actors". Karin Rodrigues as Goneril and Suzana Faini as Regan were superior, if contrasted to the fragile Rachel Ripani as Cordelia, he argues. Also Marcos Suchara, says Macksen, is not convincing, reducing the Fool to an empty character with plenty of useless histrionics.

Without overtly attempting to make a Shakespearean drama serve a political purpose, as the Porão production did, and certainly not having the same "academic accuracy" that permeated Celso Nunes' production, Paulo Autran and Ulysses Cruz succeeded in insuring a popular reception for Shakespeare. However commercial their intentions were, and whatever other needs they may have served, they succeeded in promoting Shakespeare to thousands of people who otherwise would not have been exposed to that kind of theatrical event. Indeed, not denying the importance of the three mentioned productions for my purposes, they mostly served to provide a valid background to a better understanding of the production directed by Ron Daniels and performed by Raul Cortez, which in fact is the main focus of my study and the object of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RON DANIELS' *KING LEAR* WITH RAUL CORTEZ: 2000 – 2001

PRODUCTION COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL EVALUATION

3.1 PRELIMINARIES

In this chapter my attention moves to the 2000 – 2001 Ron Daniels' *Rei Lear,* as this production is better documented than previous ones, and the juxtaposition of selected information examined from various points of view provides an interpretative parameter that can be marked by particular cultural perspectives. The characteristics and distinctive qualities of *Rei Lear* will be scrutinized as elements that might have guided this production. This means that identifying and analyzing those moments that represent important textual and performance choices, acknowledging the dynamics between and among author, text, director, designers and audience help to identify certain patterns in the production I am concerned with.

The discussion of how to construct a critical response is sometimes abstract, but the method should be easy to understand if a key to perceive the play as a whole is provided. With the combination of large ideas and the attention to specific details, I intend to capture and express what is special and distinctive in *Rei Lear.* Ron Daniels had a clear and unmistakable position, displaying characteristics that represented paradigms for performance-oriented studies, and in the director's choices, some of which explained in letters, I was able to find evidence of his express intentions. In addition to the richness and subtlety expressed in those letters, they also represent a valuable resource to analyze the production, providing commitments from both academic and theatre people in an effort to yield fuller access to a given play by Shakespeare. However, and before starting my analysis of the letters I should better warn my reader: at the risk of overloading my readers with translations, since in previous pages I have been translating almost all the information written in Portuguese into

English, I have decided to reproduce Ron Daniels' letters in the language they were originally written. The same procedure was adopted while presenting the letters exchanged between Daniels and J.C.Serroni, and part of the articles released by the press, since I believe it would add an extra interest to my thesis. A subtext as subtle and yet as particular as those presented in the aforementioned letters, if translated, would never reflect precisely the sort of feeling sometimes so nicely expressed in Portuguese.

Raul Cortez as Rei Lear.

So, it is a case of placing Daniels' production within a larger contextual field and of suggesting the extent to which the production's meaning and significance are intimately tied to the circumstances in which it was performed and received, audience remaining the most elusive component in the staging of this specific text. Daniels' approach to *Rei Lear* displays typically the concern of a modern cultural production, and an understanding of the implications of language and its wider socio-political consequences. The 2000 setting of this production did provide one richly suggestive moment, with *Rei Lear* seen as part of a larger

set of cultural values, justifying a debate that posits Shakespeare either as an alternative to the culture industry or as simply one of its most successful products.

By the mid-1990's, a sea change had occurred in Brazilian theatre, making it the most active boom period of Shakespearean productions, drawing audiences of sufficient size to justify all the money and effort invested. Unlike the political correctness practice of groups such as the Porão-Opinião, whose work was studied in chapter two, directors opted increasingly for big-name, high-production revivals with less critical edge and higher market appeal, since one of the hallmarks of contemporary theatre is the interest in a large number of spectators. Although responses varied greatly, different approaches to Shakespeare can be mutually supportive, each providing experiences that might be incorporated or avoided by the following productions.

Obviously Brazilian theatre has made the plays "modern" in its own way. When Jan Knott with his book *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, and the Bertolt Brecht's Berliner Ensemble proposed new staging approaches, it can be said that both these cultural dominants especially revolutionized non-English speaking countries. Shakespeare could then be considered a "contemporary", and his plays closely related to our lives. Understandably then, performance has become an important field of studies, especially when dealing with impulses to create or recreate local identity, recognizing that Shakespearean plays may take many forms in different cultures, since as stated by Sarah Werner, "one of the hallmarks of modern theatre is its interest in the spectator" (93). Theatre works in this way as an attempt to reveal our present condition of life, and so the plays have been enjoyed by every new generation. Moreover, quoting W.B.Worthen, Werner argues that modern drama and modern theatre "cast the spectators, so to speak, as part of the spectacle" (93), almost paraphrasing Susan Bennett's opinion that "The horizons of expectations brought by an audience to the theatre are bound to

interact with every aspect of the theatrical event" (108). Few people would disagree with this, and most critics would say that the audience can recognize things easier when and if the space and time of the performance is the one they are inserted in. In other words, the conflict was not whether Shakespeare could be seen as part of our contemporary world, but over how best to accomplish that goal.

To turn now to the issue I alluded to earlier, and if we want to look for evidence of Shakespeare's popularity, the end of the twentieth century in Brazil provides ample material, since in São Paulo alone there were two other productions competing with Daniels' *Rei Lear*: *A Megera Domada,* directed by Mauro Mendonça Filho, and *Ricardo III*, directed by Yara Novaes. The Rede Globo television early-evening soap opera at the time, *O Cravo e a Rosa,* based on *The Taming of the Shrew,* was initially released to have 106 daily episodes, which, due to unexpected popularity were increased to 220, more than one hundred per cent the originally scheduled chapters. Almost at the same time, *Shakespeare in Love* was one of the most popular films, earning general acclaim, high ticket sales, thirteen Oscar nominations and several Oscar wins, including Best Picture and Best Actress. Another point I would like to bring up has to do with the fact that Harold Bloom's *Shakespeare: the Invention of the Human,* translated into Portuguese by professor J.R. O'Shea, sold a high number of copies for a 745-page nonfiction, non-self-help book. The convergence of these different ways of getting in touch with Shakespeare has revitalized his plays and made them an indelible part of urban culture in late twentieth-century Brazil.

As seen in Chapter 2, Brazilian directors were quick to acknowledge that they had modernized *King Lear* aiming at a particular end and having a specific focus: a broad market, with a language that corresponded to twentieth-century public and in the light of a Brazilian aesthetics, and among them one cannot forget Nunes and Cruz. These previously studied

productions can be mutually supportive, each providing experiences helping to understand the different responses given to the same play. However, while conceding the undoubted critical success of some of these productions, I grant that they have at the same time ironically served to obscure the fact that frequently some of them were either barely profitable or not profitable at all, with a seeming popularity artificially inflated by careful publicity. Indeed, earlier Brazilian experiences with Shakespeare have suggested that, given the fact that our country had a potential market for Shakespeare, keeping production cost low would be one of the crucial issues, especially for small companies. Economic problems and the fear of not making enough funds were not unrealistic, originating a conflict involving creative production techniques. Again a good example would be Celso Nunes' production, which, regardless of being acclaimed by the critics, had a greatly reduced presence of the public only two months after the première.

In this context, several points emerge from an examination of Ron Daniels' production of *Rei Lear* opening in São Paulo in August 2000. To understand them properly, we need a rather complex analysis, such as that proposed by Halio's methodology, in which he supplies a number of questions "that should help audiences inquire more deeply into the nature of their experiences during and after witnessing a Shakespeare play in performance" (2), claiming therefore that plays have to be studied in relation to audiences. Certainly what echoed from Daniels' production, and is indispensable to take into consideration, is the pattern used to confront the realities of a modern world and the choices which were not simply repeated but consciously made in the hope of achieving a positive response from the audience.

"What makes Shakespeare so contemporary is his universal aspect," wrote professor Luiz Fernando Ramos, from Universidade de São Paulo (*Correio Braziliense* 8 Oct. 2000), as *Rei Lear* and other Shakespearean plays regained popularity. Therefore, in this chapter it is my

intention to study the aforementioned staging drawing mostly on Halio's coherent discussion of aspects of a production as capable of evoking the force of the text conceived as engaged with action and producing different performance possibilities. The first aspect concerns the text itself and the resolution of thorny difficulties, when the director has to make choices that will (or not) address the legacy of *King Lear* to a Brazilian audience. The second aspect will deal with the set design, costumes, decors and props, establishing a visual style, for this was a production keyed to a distinctive set. This is followed by an analysis of character construction, stage business and overall coherence of the production and how such elements blend together under Ron Daniels direction, "recognizing that no performance of any Shakespearean play can be definitive" (Halio 2), being also true that, after all, every performance is in various ways a constant challenge open to new opportunities and changes.

3.2 CONSTRUCTING THE TEXT

Much has been written about the textual puzzles that surround many Shakespearean texts, and *King Lear* presents us with a complicated textual history. Indeed, coming to terms with Shakespeare implies dealing with the basic problem of reading the text, and even though a few historians and translators, such as Barbara Heliodora for instance, have always aimed to be definitive and final, some others have instead foregrounded the complexities involved in any attempt to reconstruct the play. In Heliodora's words "It seems very strange to me that someone should read the original, like and appreciate it (. . .) and then dismiss the *formal aspects* (my italics) believing that it will make no difference" ("Reasons" 225). The textual changes provided by Daniels achieved the main desired goal, which was to engage and entertain playgoers who were familiar with theatrical performances, and television viewers

mostly attracted by the name of the main actor. Daniels, as an experienced director, was also concerned with the commercial, as well as the artistic advantages of reshaping the text. One obvious way the director did that was to have characters in the play, who offer their evaluation of what they are going through (or putting others through), use a vocabulary which is easily recognizable by the public. Indeed, as will be seen later in this chapter, small changes and elisions resulted in a significant effect providing links not easily obtained without Daniels' approach to a more contemporary (and Brazilian) world.

"Certainly what the modern director must deal with is the gap between the period of the text and the period of the production," declared Ron Daniels to Jotabê Medeiros, and more: "The text is the biggest creation of a privileged mind, and one cannot be afraid of speak it up loudly" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 15 Aug. 1998). In the same article, when Medeiros asked about the sometimes chopped-down script and the impact it could produce in the understanding of the play, Daniels replied: "The central story will still be there. That is all people remember anyhow".

In addition to the unquestioned success and the supposed defects of the production, it is also necessary to stress that Daniels concerns himself with stage business, especially while rearranging the text, producing clear, incisive and swiftly moving dialogues. As an example of the humour that sometimes permeates Daniels' translation is the response of Kent after Lear argues with him about his age: "Not so young, Sir, to love a woman for singing / nor so old to dote on her for anything; / I have years on my back forty-eight" (1.4.40-4), which becomes: "*Não sou tão garoto prá comer padre só porque usa saia / nem tão gagá prá ficar se babando com qualquer besteira que mulher faz. / Tenho quarenta e oito anos".* One can easily imagine that the lines certainly moved some audiences to laughter.

The text of *King Lear* exists in at least two different forms, the quarto printed in 1608, and the revised version of the folio in 1623, as studied in previous chapters of this thesis, but the question that arises is its relation to these fissures of time, to a past that is lost, which Halio sees as "seldom so fixed that new insights and illuminations cannot be introduced and enjoyed" (19). The 2000-2001 *Rei Lear* production under the direction of Ron Daniels had its own difficulties in trying to reshape and provide a new text in order to reveal innovative features, being some of them easily recognizable, however, due to a quality of openness, perceptive metaphors apparently invented on the spot, attention to characters and mostly a Brazilian contemporary motivation through textual cues. The director interpreted the scenes in the light of various possibilities offered by the text, and also used stage business that made unprecedented statements, a fact which was observed by some reviewers. According to Marici Salomão, for instance, the strongly choreographic duels between Edgar and Edmund, when they use "*peixeiras*" instead of swords, supplement the "intentions carried by words," while at the same time "add movement to the scene" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 23 Aug. 2000).

In the 2000-2001 *Rei Lear* it seems clear that the director suggested ways of understanding the Brazilian social environment, while grasping the degrees to which an earlier written play could be shaped and engaged with a contemporary society. The real problem, as Daniels among others was quite aware, dealt primarily with Shakespeare's vocabulary and imagery, which are difficult for a twentieth-century audience to understand, since the linguistic structures change according to the way people speak and conceive themselves as a group. To start at the most fundamental level, some directors make choices on behalf of their spectators, usually fearful of losing their attention and not getting it back. Many of these directorial alterations are tiny and go unnoticed, just aiming to eliminate elements perceived as obscure, awkward or beyond the understanding of a given public, as for example the

somewhat archaic words "*gorro*" and "*barrete*," used previously in some Portuguese translations, were replaced by more contemporary ones, like "*chapéu",* as will be seen in the coming pages of this section. Other alterations, however, include substantial cuts, striking design choices and a variety of innovations. Daniels, though not unaware of theoretical concerns, was able to offer his audience rewards mostly by locating the text in a space it could resonate, as promised in the programme of *Rei Lear*: "as if it were written in Portuguese."

Ron Daniels was always consistent in the way he approached the play, and among the many virtues the director wanted to reveal for his choices in rescripting the play, of particular importance was the search of a "spiritual harmony that must exist in every single production", as confessed to Gerald Thomas (*Folha Online* 7Aug. 2000). To put it differently, one of the many interpretative implications linked to the sense of traditional formality and decorum represented by Barbara Heliodora, the invited translator for the 2000-2001 *King Lear*, versus the need of a contemporary redefinition of the text, defined by the director as essential, was the search to bring theatrical vocabulary with significant meanings to a contemporary audience. In fact, difficulties faced by the director confronting Heliodora's script must have posed as inevitable for a modern production, since her ideas would strongly conflict with Daniels'. In an essay published in *Accents Now Known: Shakespeare's Drama in Translation,* Heliodora explains her reasons for translating Shakespeare:

> I am unable to take seriously the idea that there are two different possible translations of Shakespeare, one meant to be read, which would be concerned mostly with literary qualities, and another to be staged, which would eventually become the creation of the director, fully empowered to alter, change, transform anything he felt like. This latter cannot be valid when the director still intends to claim he is doing a play by Shakespeare. (229)

Obviously, while taking on the director's choices, providing a translation to fit Daniels' needs, and being at the same time an academic and respected critic, Heliodora, with a lifelong investment in Shakespeare, could easily slip into attack, since neutrality on such

matters may be a fiction. In order to minimize such reactions, the professor-translator was dismissed, and the director produced his own translation assuming it to be more appropriate and able to reach beyond the circumstances of the Brazilian historical period at the dawn of the new century. Eventually, and almost a year after *Rei Lear's* premiere, Barbara Heliodora would recognize that the production was "an opportunity that should not be missed" by the public, even if, she simultaneously complained, "part of the poetry vanished with Daniels' translation" (*O Globo* 7 May 2001).

As obvious as it might seem, Daniels constantly alluded to the text as something that should be understood by the target public: "how can the director respect and, at the same time, provide a text that can be easily understood by the [Brazilian] public? We cannot be afraid of strong emotions, carried by "Brazilian" words or else everything will be extremely boring" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 15 Aug. 1998). In a letter in response to my queries, when argued about his choice to avoid Barbara Heliodora as the translator, Daniels stressed that the choice of words is never a purely linguistic decision (his opinion expressed in Portuguese). Drawing on the director's guidance, and having his permission and approval, I quote part of his letter (complete original in the Appendix H):

> *Barbara Heliodora, que a classe teatral brasileira considera profundamente reacionária, tem expectativas, não, são exigências de um rigor "shakesperiano" e "poético" que têm raízes na sua luta contra o mau gosto, o oportunismo que ela vê em torno de si. Por outro lado, um crítico como Michael Billington, do jornal The Guardian, que está profundamente entediado com um Shakespeare tradicional inglês ansia (sic) por uma interpretação radical que possa re-inventar Shakespeare completamente. Ele adorou a montagem de Macbeth do diretor espanhol Calixto Bieto (eu também ADOREI! – no final Macbeth se levanta e dá um tiro na cabeça do chatinho do Malcolm! Que alegria me deu!). Tenho certeza que a Bárbara teria achado o espetáculo abominável.* (6 Jul 2002)

Undue reverence for the original text evidently did not conflict with adapting it to a specific audience; after all, when asked about his sources while translating *King Lear* into

Brazilian-Portuguese, the director simply answered: "*Acho que foi uma dessas edições baratas da Penguin*" (ibid.).

In staging a translated play it is necessary to understand the codes of social conduct, since "What a play meant for its author and its original audience may be quite different from what it signifies in contemporary production" (Thomas Clayton qtd. in Halio 11), and Daniels was quite aware that certain social situations require that the characters speak within certain established forms in order to capture the public's attention. The very first line of the text in *King Lear* is not a line at all but a stage direction: "Enter Kent, Gloucester and Edmund " who start a chatty prose, being followed, in line 34 by the king and his entourage. Although we are less than 40 lines into the play, by the end of Scene I, all the major characters have revealed, in words at least, their essential characters, while the audience feels that the play can only lead to catastrophe. This means we can watch events unfold until the terrible end that cannot be other than a moving experience, with the last scene suggesting a wide range of reactions.

In translating *King Lear* into Portuguese, Daniels proved to be right, cutting lines that would be obscure to a contemporary audience, such as the references to Poor Tom in Act 3, while preserving the play's essential structure and meaning, for his intention was ultimately to preserve and respect the text, as can be gleaned from most of his interviews. Halio mentions that some productions "can lead far from the original texts" while others "may succeed in bringing us closer to the spirit of Shakespeare's plays" (13), and what I attempt to show through the analysis of Daniels' translation is that his effort was a result of a critical reorganization of time and space in order to be better understood by a Brazilian contemporary audience.

As a glance at the lines below soon makes clear, we learn that certain words in K*ing Lear* revealed to be unnecessary and sometimes even dull to a given target audience, while

other elements in the translation can pose problems and constitute obscurity for today's playgoers. Providing the text with a sample of pragmatic changes and elisions, the director at the same time added humour and theatrical life to the narrative, especially when dealing with some of the Fool's lines, as for instance at 1. 4. 99-100: "Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb". In Daniels' version we have: "*Ô meu, pega aí o meu chapéu*" (1.4.99-100). Ironically, it is impossible to compare Heliodora's choice for the same lines, since her contribution to the project, bringing her previous translation for *King Lear* to the level desired by Daniels, never happened. Comparing the same lines to Aíla de Oliveira Gomes', who, being of the same generation as Heliodora, and a retired professor from UFRJ, is also considered a 'purist,' the text reads as: "*O melhor para vossemecê é ficar logo com o meu barrete*" (83). Taking Pietro Nassetti's translation as another comparative example, the general effect does not differ much from Aíla's: "*Senhor, melhor farias se ficasses com o meu gorro*". The two translations reveal that the access to a currently spoken Portuguese language could be improved, since some of the words here are not updated. Nowadays few young theatre-goers might recognize the words "*gorro*" or worse, "*barrete*" as related to chapéu, and of course part of the understanding of the lines should be problematic, at least for the spectator not familiar with the script.

A flexible and explorative onstage performance should be mostly defined by its ability to support and control the range of changes, especially in the text, often as an attempt to provide interaction with the audience and a clearer narrative. To illustrate, another good example of Daniels' translation can be found at 3.4.126-129, when lines were cut and rearranged, presumably because the director and his actors were fearful of losing the climactic moment of Gloucester meeting Edgar disguised as Poor Tom. Daniels opted to shorten the lines "Prithee, Nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild

field were like an old lecher's heart; a small spark, all the rest on 's body cold. Look! Here comes a walking fire." The directorial text read as: "*Paizinho, por favor, com calma, a noite não está boa para natação. Por favor, paizinho, me diga se maluco é gente fina ou homem do povo?"* The director seized an opportunity to generate in-the-theatre excitement by symbolically including the audience as "*povo*", while the "*malucos*" were "*gente fina*". As sometimes happens with transposition of scenes, for example, the cutting of lines can also have unforeseen results. Of particular interest is how one seemingly small change can turn out to have larger implications. So far as audience reaction is concerned, playgoers in São Paulo (at least at the night performance I attended) were openly amused by the extremity of the Fool's lines. Daniels' choice certainly obtained a better audience response if compared to Gomes': "*Por favor, Tiozinho, sossega. Esta noite não está nada boa para nadar. Agora, olha, um pequenino lume no descampado parece o coração de um velho lúbrico: mínima chama e o resto do corpo todo frio. Olha! aí vem uma chama ambulante*" (193). Daniels' translation, shortening the lines while adding a question at the end, achieved a considerable attention to the Fool's lines.

Comparable examples are not hard to find, as at 2.2.61-65: "Thou whoreson zed! thou unnecessary letter! My Lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a jakes with him. Spare my grey beard, you wagtail?" Again Daniels probably believed that a modern interpreter could feel uncomfortable with Gomes' translation: "*E tu, Zê, filho de cadela, letra desnecessária! Caro senhor, se me permitires, vou triturar este vilão grosseiro até ele virar argamassa, depois vou rebocar com ele as paredes de uma cloaca. Com que, então, poupaste-me as barbas brancas, ó trêmula lavadeira*?" (127). Daniels made the lines shorter and Kent simply had to shout: "*Seu Z filho da puta! Letra inútil. O senhor dá linceça, (sic) vou dar uma porrada nesse cara, tá velho careca... Seu puxa-*

saco!" Chances are that most playgoers who chuckled were not aware of anything unusual in this line reading, and for this reaction Daniels' translation seems more appropriate.

As noted earlier, while ommiting words and lines that could cause confusion or misunderstandings on the part of the audience, replacing them with a recognizable vocabulary, the director resorted to a variety of options. However, at 3.4.120-123, when a desperate Lear shouts: "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come; unbutton here!", Daniels' controlling translation changed "forked animal" into "*animal de duas pernas*" while "off, off, you lendings" was omitted, being replaced simply by "Come; unbutton here": "*Venham, desabotoem aqui*." Daniels' conception, avoiding the common translation of "*animal bifurcado*," used in Gomes', Nassetti's and even in Heliodora's first version, preferring "*animal de duas pernas*," makes a simple lexical choice appear to be more adequate and natural to a contemporary public usually not conscious of these assumptions.

Nevertheless, even in his efforts to accommodate the text to the Brazilian public, when unclear words have simply been eliminated, in some instances Daniels does not merely omit lines, especially when they have interpretative significance, since that is undeniably the director's main purpose. With this insight in mind, I offer some observations of lines that try to capture the complexities of the play, especially the last scenes, recognizing at the same time that the action going on when the play reaches the "promised end" is too complex to be contained by a short formula. The pattern will not be fitted easily into the moral categories upon which most of us rely, since the sayings range from a sense that the gods are irrationally cruel: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods / they kill us for their sport" (4.1. 57-58), to a call for stoical resignation: "Men must endure" (5.2.9), and "The gods are just, and for our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us" (5.3.169-170).

It should not be surprising, I would argue, that in order to preserve the full impact of Edgar's speech, who responds to the stunned Kent's question: "Is this the promis'd end*?"* (5.3.264) with another question: "Or image of horror?" (5.3.265), the Brazilian-Portuguese lines translated by Daniels were read straight with no major adjustments: "*Esse é o fim que nos foi prometido?*", with a helpless Edgar answering with another question: "*Ou é imagem daquele horror?*" Indeed, what I am suggesting is that at least in one striking example Daniels' textual translation does not differ much from all the other more "purist" translators, as for instance in Gomes' Portuguese translation Kent asks: "*Será o anunciado fim do mundo?*, while Edgar also responds with a question: *Ou só a imagem dele?"*. In fact, Daniels' lines keep the noun "*horror*", offering a most powerful image of the "promised end", while Gomes prefers to eliminate it.

The scene of Lear carrying Cordelia's body is stunning, and through the lines delivered it becomes apparent that the king knows that she is really dead: "She's gone forever. / I know when one's dead, and when one lives. / She's dead as earth." (5.3. 259-260-61), translated by both Daniels and Oliveira Gomes as "*Ela se foi para sempre. / Eu sei muito bem quando alguém está morto ou se ainda tem vida. Ela está morta como a terra."* However, when Lear seeks more definitive visual proof that Cordelia is dead, and mentions two objects, a mirror and a feather, Gomes and Daniels slightly differ: "*Dá-me um espelho*" and "*Esta pena se agita"* translates the former, while the latter prefers "*Emprestem-me um espelho"* (addressing more than one character) and "*Esta pena se move"*.

In the last lines of the dying king another interesting divergence can be noticed between the two above mentioned translators. The last three lines spoken by the king are: "Pray you, undo this button: Thank you Sir. / Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips, / Look there, look there!" (5.3. 310-311-312), translated by Gomes as "*Solta este botão aqui,*

por favor. / Vês isto? Olhai p'ra ela. / Olhai os lábios dela, vede ali!", while Daniels preferred to move beyond language in order to achieve a more disturbing effect. His translation provides the king's dying speech with a sequence of inarticulate and desperate sounds, at once human and inhuman, as if offering an expression of complete failure of language: "*Por gentileza, desabotoa aqui. Obrigado. / Ó. Ó. Ó. Ó."* Examining Daniels' choices and identifying the pattern involved in Lear's delivery of his last lines, I find that the translation here gives the impression that Lear's experience is beyond words, accommodating perhaps a reference to "Love and be silent", in act 1, scene 1, when Cordelia failed the test, unable to express herself verbally.

Being true that in the process of reordering and reshaping the original play it was not Daniels' intention "simply" to omit lines, which he occasionally did, but to explore opportunities to generate understanding and even provocative reactions from the audience, we might better regard the director's translation as yet another variation of a text that has always been unstable. As the sampling of choices in translating the play makes clear, the rationale behind the pragmatic decisions of cut (or not) might vary widely, but most of them, if not all, concern the playgoers. The desire to bring the text closer to the public from Rio and São Paulo is too explicit, and too visible, using language that are part of everyday speech in that region. Therefore, in the production Daniels employed linguistic forms to relate the text to the context in which it was said, admitting at the same time the dimensions of the intellectual understanding as the promised end of the theatrical event. However, and assuming that not all the playgoers who attended *Rei Lear* performances lived in the same geographical spot of the country, in one instance at least Daniels' translation could have posed a dialect problem. When the director translated "The knave turns fool that runs away" (2.4.86) into Portuguese, the line remained: "*O canalha vira bobo quando se pica",* which to undiscerned ears could well

present an allusion to drugs, since not everybody, (myself included) might have been acquainted with the slang term *se pica,* meaning "running away", "escaping", as in the original sense.

Kristin Linklater has articulated: "If the plays are spoken and performed, not academically studied, and if the sounds of the words and the rhythms of the language are felt, Shakespeare's voice will call the voices of eloquence that live in everyone . . ." (qtd. in Bennett *Performing* 42). Of course other images in the received text can also be adjusted to obtain a desired effect but Linklater's argument for the liberation of Shakespeare's voice nicely connects with Daniels' intentions whose translation, being dominantly target-oriented, used more palatable solutions. As might be expected, it is possible to correlate the success of the 2000-2001 *Rei Lear* not only with the visual production of the play, but also with the communicativeness of the translated text.

Furthermore, to illustrate Daniels' persistent concerns with the text, we can report to the interview to Beth Néspoli in which he affirmed that no adaptations were needed: – "*Os atores apenas têm que seguir o texto*" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 28 June 2000) – and as expressed to Jotabê Medeiros two years prior to the premiére of *Rei Lear*: "*Eu vejo o texto como um mapa no qual nós, atores e diretor estamos planejando uma viagem*" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 24 August 1998). At the same time it is important to recognize the director's treatment of the dramatic text, his perception of music, when referring to the "*sonoridade característica da maneira brasileira de falar português*," as stated in "Musicalidade brasileira na tragédia de *'Rei Lear*" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 24 August 2000). Daniels has argued that his *Rei Lear* was conceived to "speak" to current society, as being rooted in its relevance to today's Brazilian world and its problems, in what constantly seemed to be a reference to the lines "What we ought to say*"* (5.3.324). This kind of verbal expertise had a double effect, both

to place the play in a specific cultural context and at the same time to use the context, as seen earlier, to give space to the text, eliminating some of the clumsiness occasionally found in Brazilian translations, imparting the text with a more casual approach and with words that could be easily understood by the public. In conclusion, in the programme of *Rei Lear* Daniels is quoted as saying: "*Façamos de conta. . . que Rei Lear foi escrito em português, para ser falada por atores brasileiros e ouvida por uma platéia brasileira com gozo e prazer.*" In the same programme the director refers to John Barton, from the Royal Shakespeare Company, emphasizing the extent to which the famous iambic pentameter was the natural way of speaking English: "*Vamos procurar essa naturalidade na nossa versão para que Shakespeare possa falar diretamente aos nossos corações. Façamos de conta que Shakespeare é brasileiro."*

3.3 CONSTRUCTING THE SET DESIGN AND COSTUMES

For more than one observer the set design in *Rei Lear* was labeled as remarkable, and *O Estado de São Paulo* certainly produced considerable theatrical excitement when announcing that J. C. Serroni wanted a "tropical" *Rei Lear* (24 July 2000): "*Nosso teatro é diferente do teatro europeu. . . O Ron Daniel vive for a do Brasil há mais de trinta anos, mas mesmo assim ele ainda é brasileiro e entende. . .*" After all, in constructing a set design it is always of potential interest to the public when the action of a play is placed in a period that differs from the time in which it is staged, and when adjustments have been made in order to fit or please a given audience. Drawing in part on his RSC experience, Daniels suggested in many occasions that scenery per se was not essential for the staging of Shakespeare: "*Qualquer um pode produzir um show maravilhoso: você só precisa de um cenógrafo*

habilidoso para ajudá-lo. Mas produzir algo que ao mesmo tempo faça o público e os atores brilharem é outra história."(*O Estado de São Paulo* 15 Aug. 1998). The quote can be understood as the director's response to the ideologically induced demanding desire to achieve "higher levels of technical proficiency," as stated by Catherine Graham (60) as a means of provoking a result "easily available to large numbers of people" (61).

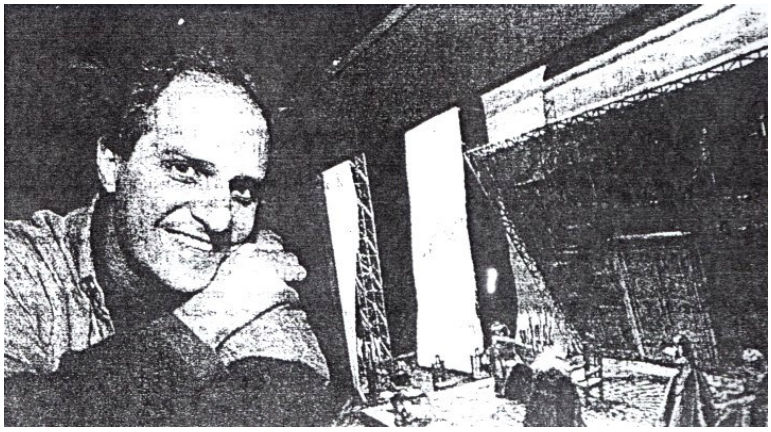
When discussing plans for the Royal Shakespeare Company's new London theatre in the Barbican, Peter Hall opposed actors to spectacle: "Theatre is certainly actors, but not necessarily scenery. . . a pillar that is a meaningful symbol of the whole town, or a suggestive texture, can help the actor. But they should not take over his job" (qtd. in Brown 29). Indeed, a particular challenge is often posed when the scenic transposition is not complete, or the use of properties or technological effects fails to be conveniently exploited. In this case it should not be surprising if a given production looks like "a transplant, not an indigenous flowering" (Halio 28), a risk that Daniels was certainly not willing to take.

"The director's strongest ally is the designer" (19), announced John Russell Brown, while to Halio, "working closely with a designer is crucial" (Understanding 75). Perhaps those are reasons that explain the director and designer meetings usually being previous to the rehearsals with actors. In the case at hand, the process of constructing and dealing with the set design started as early as two years before the first rehearsals, when Daniels and J.C.Serroni, who was also responsible for the 70 different costumes, first met during a workshop at the Escola de Teatro Lígia Cortez in São Paulo. Daniels, who at that time lived in New York City, and Serroni, an architect in São Paulo, would correspond for one and a half year, sharing ideas about the scenery and costumes of the prospective production. The director was aware that any property introduced in a large modern theatre, as Teatro SESC Vila Mariana, designed, as most of our modern theatres, for the audience to be seated in parallel rows facing

a picture-frame opening, would gain attention and therefore should be seen clearly even from the most distant seat. Thus, the map, which is visually the most symbolic and important prop in Act 1, working as the instrument of clarification, was the first element to be mentioned by Daniels. It is interesting to read some of the correspondence exchanged between the period of November 1998 and June 2000, which was partly published by *O Estado de São Paulo* on 24 July 2000:

> *(. . .) O espaço do rei está ótimo. Gosto muito da noção de que a civilização é este casarão antigo e esta sala bonita, elegante, imponente. Símbolo da riqueza e do poder. Decadente também: os pobres,os marginais e os danados não têm lugar aqui. (. . .) E o mapa do país, com as três divisões do reinado: como está este mapa? Está em cima de uma mesa? Ai! Pendurado como telão ou cortina? Ai, ai, ai! Este é o problema que tem que ser encarado por cada diretor e cenógrafo que fazem Lear! Nós também precisamos encontrar uma solução bacana pra esse mapa infernal!* (From Ron Daniels, by email on 11 Nov. 1998)

It is perhaps not surprising that the evident concern of the director dealing with the issue of the map does not fail to acknowledge that the object would define the situation and provide a point of visual focus. Significantly, the map in *King Lear*, which in this production was simply stretched on the floor, presents associations with a unified kingdom soon to be divided. Despite the singularity of the property, it is also true that throughout the opening scene — the division of the kingdom — the map articulates visually the action of the scene, being a reminder of Lear's intentions.



J.C. Serroni and his model for the scenery of Ron Daniels' *Rei Lear.*

In sum, Daniels expressed some of his doubts concerning the scenery of the Brazilian production, suggesting that along with the text, it was also object of a good deal of obsessive directorial attention. Such uncertainties can be inferred from the lines sent to Serroni, when the director confronts the problem of the great moving platform, a solution proposed by Serroni which in fact was succesfully used as a background for the entire play. In reading the letters it becomes evident that there would be no attempt to impose a single directorial design concept on the Brazilian architect, but rather an effort to share ideas:

> *(. . .) Acho maravilhosa a idéia da parede da sala tombando no meio da tempestade. O casarão começando a desmoronar. A civilização se revela frágil e inadequada. Mas, diga-me, o que aconteceria se o segundo piso baixasse não até o primeiro piso, mas se ficasse pendurado no ar, num ângulo de 20 ou 30 graus? [*the first hint for the platform*] Comecei a visualizar como seria, se, em cima deste piso, no alto, aparecesse um homem, o Rei Lear, o vento nos cabelos brancos, uivando contra a tempestade!* [here the director was able to visualize the scene two years prior to its actual release] *(. . .) Quanto ao espaço da guerra civil: gosto muito da idéia do fogo. Só falta queimar tudo, como camponeiros (sic) queimando as raízes depois da colheita (. . .) O mundo terá de ser criado de novo.* (from Daniels by e-mail on 18 Nov. 1998)

Indeed, with the director's guidance, Serroni's answers did not fail to offer innovative alternatives:

> *Fiz uma maquete e tentei fotografar cada cena tentando algumas possibilidades. Consegui eliminar um dos planos, já que a cena 2 pode ser feita com o plano da cena 3, num grau de 25º ou cerca de 1.80 m. do piso, como você havia sugerido. Quanto ao mapa, cheguei a pensar num grande tapete no piso inclinado. Ou um mapa pendurado no plano de fundo que é posto e tirado. (. . .) Eu fiquei pensando como vamos distinguir os diversos momentos e espaços do primeiro ato. Através da luz? (. . .) Imagino que você vá me dizer algo sobre isso.* (. . .) *Quero te ouvir muito.* (From Serroni, via Sedex on 25 Dec.1998)

In addition to these technical and cultural considerations, what is evident is that there was a strong affinity between Daniels and Serroni who would agree in many ways, acquiring a resonance not found in many productions. The impact of Serroni's ideas on a developing Brazilian scenery was deep, and the outcome showed that many of the designer's ideas were

accepted by Daniels without much questioning. In this peculiar production the director wanted the scenery to be more than completely updated, his aesthetics became crucial: "*o mundo terá de ser criado de novo*" he said, concluding his letter. In some productions the debate over what resources to use includes a sense of financial exigency, but as *Rei Lear* was sponsored by Volkswagen, with no shortage of money, those problems did not seem to constitute a major issue to interfere with choices made. Such directorial inventions together with a clear understanding of the designer ensured a notable experiment, especially with the use of the huge leaning platform as a symbol of a fragmented kingdom, also allowing the audience to witness the decay of the characters.

Concerned with the audience's reaction, director and designer provided a clear and simple stage design in an unambiguous conception of the play, immediately recognized by the critics as a new way of staging Shakespeare. Marici Salomão announced that "*Três diferentes projetos foram desenvolvidos para o Rei Lear antes da versão final quando um sofisticado maquinário foi criado para acrescentar movimento ao grande portallocalizado entre as duas torres metálicas.*" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 24 July 2000). By the use of the machinery that moved the golden wall, the set designer wanted to achieve a result obtained thanks to a high level of technical proficiency. Regardless of the sophistication of the mechanism, the reaction of the public should be only to consider the social and psychological changes revealed or suggested by the set devices. At the same time, the simplicity in the almost monochromatic brownish set put a great deal of responsibility on the light designer, in this case Domingos Quintiliano, who would create mood and atmosphere by the effective use of illumination.

Thanks to Serroni's creativity, allied to a strong financial support, the elaborate scenery was finally built. However, problems started to appear when director and designer had to decide on costumes, which were more than seventy. "*As produções anteriores* [of *Rei Lear*] *tinham*

figurinos com um ar muito 'siberiano' ", Serroni mentioned to Marici Salomão from *O Estado de São Paulo;* "*. . .no Brasil ninguém usa roupas assim tão pesadas, portanto tínhamos que achar algo mais brasileiro.* " (24 Jul. 2000), he added. Serroni and Daniels decided that the fabrics used in the costumes should be mostly Brazilian linen, which in Serroni's opinion were "light and tropical", a kind of material not often used in Brazilian productions because it wrinkles easily. Paradoxically, what seemed to be a problem, in Serroni's opinion, turned out to be a great advantage, since the characters' costumes would gradually lose their shapes until an almost complete nudity. Such choices in garments brought consequences with them: Raul Cortez, who always wanted traditional Elizabethan costumes for "his", Lear was not very pleased with the resulting costumes designed for the King. While director and designer decided that King Lear should also wear, especially during acts 3 and 4, clothes made with simple and not refined fabric, the main actor believed that this choice would impart inadequacy and ambiguity to his role. Again I believe it would be useful to transcribe part of a letter I received from Ron Daniels on June 24, 2002, in which the director's disappointment with Cortez is clearly evidenced:

> *(. . .) Por outro lado, o gosto teatral do Raul, a sua expectativa, apesar de seu trabalho com diretores maravilhosos como o Zé Celso (As Boas, etc) e Antunes, é muito tradicional. O Raul queria era um espetáculo "de primeiro mundo" [Daniels' quotations] de âmbito internacional.*
> *A sua primeira reação perante a minha tradução foi de medo, pois estava brasileira demais. Ele nunca entendeu o caboclo do Edgar! Nem mesmo o candomblé do Edmundo. Nunca se sentiu confortável com a música nordestina do Quarteto Armorial, nem com os figurinos femininos baseados em Maria Bonita. O que o Raul queria era fazer um teatro clássico, tradicional, elizabetano, com golinhas rendadas, baseadas nas pinturas contemporâneas do Shakespeare... foi uma luta constante, subversiva...(. . .) Não, não, não, tem que ser coisa européia...*
> *O resultado foi que no Lear decidi incorporar ativamente essas contradições dentro do espetáculo e fazer delas a estética / política da nossa interpretação. Você lembra que o nosso Lear começava como se fosse teatrão, coisa do TBC antigo, formal, impostado, com figurinos "clássicos," ai, como o Raul gostava de sua manta vermelha, de sua coroa!*
> *(. . .) Mas Raul queria morrer com aquela camisola branca. Insistiu. Nem pijama queria! Tinha que ser aquela merda de camisola!!! Ok. No Problem. Que fique de*

> *camisola trágica, clássica, com aquela garotada em torno dele, a nova e bela geração, com jeans rasgados, pobres, sem pretensão a nada... Que contradição viva! Que beleza! (. . .)*

The set design, as pointed out before, was sober, and Daniels seemed to be pleased with the overall style achieved. In many occasions the director referred to the vulgarity behind building elaborate sets and costumes, an opinion expressed to Gerald Thomas: "*simplicidade sempre sera o oposto da vulgaridade*" (Folha online 7 Aug. 2000). Also considering what the director affirmed to Jefferson Del Rios:

> *O público brasileiro sempre associa Shakespeare a grandiosidade. De certa forma espera-se um espetáculo na linha de Olivier ou Gielgud. Creio que as expectativas no Brasil sejam, até certo ponto, as mesmas que existem na Inglaterra e nos Estados Unidos. Tem de se fazer 'um Shakespeare', senão vão dizer: 'O que é isso? Um negócio mambembe, um negócio pobre'. Não, tem de ter riqueza. Se eu não apresentar alguma coisa que tenha esse tom de teatro europeu, todo o mundo vai ficar chateado.. Eu porém quero um espetáculo que tenha envergadura, um grande espetáculo, mas com despojamento. E o que mais?* (*Bravo!* Aug. 2000).

Taking into account Daniels' opinion, it is not inadequate to think that, in a curious way, even evoking "*teatrão*" or "*coisa do TBC antigo*", as something he would not try to experiment, Daniels still made concessions to please both the public and Cortez, especially in act 1.

The issues of clothes and part of the discontentment of the director are not disconnected from Raul Cortez' problems in submiting to the long-studied choice of gowns designed for *Rei Lear.* Such difficulties were pointed out by *O Estado de São Paulo* when Serroni declared he was somewhat uncertain about the selection of costumes, since an even more elaborate and inventive reformulation of clothes had to be tried: "*Os trajes para o Rei Lear (Raul Cortez) ainda estão em fase de elaboração. Mais de dez desenhos já foram feitos, até experiências ao vivo com modelos. Experimentamos idéias mais próximas ao butô, mas teremos mesmo de ncontrar uma solução que expresse nossa brasilidade*" (24 Jul. 2000). That Raul Cortez, in other words, was also attempting to maintain his own authority and

responsibility for the final product is beyond discussion, complicating decisions previously made. Despite the attempts made by both director and designer to grasp a "Brazilian" solution, nothing has been finally resolved by any solution Serroni and Daniels could have fashioned: what prevailed in the end was Cortez's power to turn words and will into deeds.

Although it might be true that Daniels took the criticism of lack of regality much less seriously than Cortez, by creating a kind of clean and contemporary setting for this production, the proper etiquette required was never completely ignored. The royal presence was observed especially in act 1, as we will see, but relatively little was made out of formal ceremonies. Indeed, a near-elegiac tone rendered their meanings unmistakable to the presence of the huge and powerful king, especially on his first appearance, since for Cortez Lear was never far removed from old-fashioned English traditions. In fact, thanks to the use of devices such as spotlights and soundtrack, the public was always made aware of the majestic presence, and association of Raul Cortez with royalty never failed to be achieved.

Raul Cortez as Lear, surrounded by Bianca Castanho (Cordelia), Lígia Cortez (Regana), and Lu Grimaldi (Goneril)

The opening scene shows the throne chamber and some tall chairs, while Kent and Gloucester enter upstage wearing neutral colour costumes, the background showing the now upstanding golden platform. While the two characters cross to a downstage position to speak confidentially of the division of the kingdom, some of the other members of the court mingled behind them. All the scenery suggested power and richness, and at the same time sought simplicity and understated elegance, with a white light remaining almost unchanged. In contrast, when Lear/Cortez enters wearing a lustrous red gown and a crown, his figure picked out with moving spotlights, the effect of the mise-en-scène is such that the audience reaction shifts from placid observation to noisy applause. Reaching the center of the stage Cortez stops, significantly faces the public expressing appropriate gratitude, and rapidly walks to the throne, not before throwing part of the cloak over his left shoulder.

In its combination of simple but ingenious contemporary scenic elements, Daniels' *King Lear* is quite unlike any previous productions, steering the public away from an exclusive emphasis on outdated, anglophile aesthetic appreciation of the play. At he same time, it needs to be acknowledged that not merely visually, but in terms of its whole coherence, Daniels' and Serroni's efforts contributed to the success of the production in a manner that proved to be at once innovative and commercial.

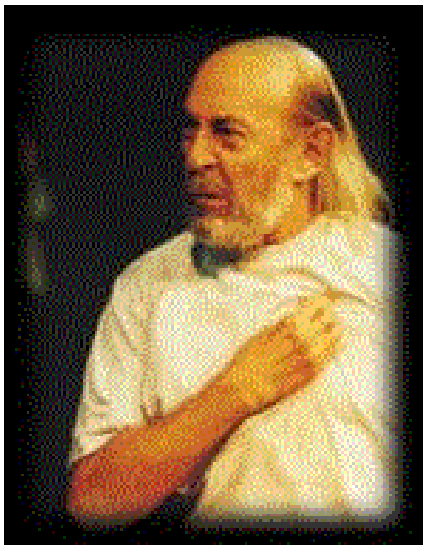
3.4 CONSTRUCTING THE CHARACTERS

Halio points out that "Finding the character is perhaps the most difficult problem an actor has to solve in approaching any important role, though even minor roles raise similar questions" (31), adding that sometimes "directors can be and often are helpful to actors trying to find their way into roles, but even their usefulness is limited" (35), which again

demonstrates that describing and showing a character's situation and emotion is not an easy task. Usually a play is studied as material to be interpreted, as the source of an infinite number of encounters between human beings, and sometimes the success, real or imagined of a character, pretty much depends on the actor's prestige, as in the case of Cortez. The reception by both the public and the critics can also determine the success or failure in the selection of actors to perform certain roles, and Daniels'/Cortez' project was highly publicized and consequently received a good deal of attention from the media. The name of Cortez associated to a Shakespearean production not only transformed but also promoted his own career and distinctive image, since the actor seemed to have learned that Shakespeare needed to be treated as an event. Though this is not entirely a matter of ego, it is to some extent an instinct for showmanship, for selling himself as a well-known actor was one way of selling Shakespeare.

Of course Raul Cortez decided to perform King Lear years before he actually had the chance to meet Ron Daniels, as the role, together with Hamlet, is considered a vehicle to demonstrate superior dramatic talents. Commenting on the privilege and opportunity of working with Daniels, Raul Cortez more than once mentioned that throughout his career he always wanted to perform Shakespeare. Cortez, at 69, felt he "was" Lear and knew what he wanted to achieve with the character: "*Desde que eu comecei a pensar em mim mesmo como um ator*", we learn, "*Eu sempre acreditei que eu deveria encenar pelo menos dois personagens de Shakespeare: Hamlet e Rei Lear, mas agora que estou no outono da minha carreira, penso que devo até mesmo brigar para encenar este rei*", he revealed to Jefferson Del Rios (*Bravo!* Aug. 2000). What we have here, in other words, is the attempt of a popular television and theatre actor to achieve distinct recognition by performing a dramatic classic. At this point Cortez was aware of the limited choices of a good Shakespeare, and many times mentioned the privilege and opportunity of working with Daniels: "*o conhecimento dele*

(Daniels) em Shakespeare é muito maior do que o meu. Eu só conheço os personagens que encontrei na vida real.", he declared to Marici Salomão (*O Estado de São Paulo*,19 Jul. 2000).



Raul Cortez as *Rei Lear*

Of course, not all reviewers believed that Cortez, who was at that time deeply engaged in a popular Rede Globo soap opera, could at the same time satisfactorily be performing a Shakespearean tragedy, although any clear estimate needs to distinguish between who was doing the reviewing and when. For instance, the same *Bravo!* Magazine, which praised Cortez in its August issue, less than two months later would print an article signed by Marcio Marciano, releasing one of the most corrosive reviews on *Rei Lear*: "*Do nada, nada virá*". The article was frankly devastating. As an illustration, Marciano begins his review with "*Rei Lear atualmente em cartaz em São Paulo prova que no Brasil é possível ganhar dinheiro investindo em arte*", ironically adding that all is needed is "*usar a velha fórmula de reunir alguns técnicos competentes e um grande nome, capaz de atrair o público* ". The reviewer then unfolds a series of problems he sees in the production, being the first to blame the director, claiming that he had rendered too much attention to Cortez, while the other members of the

cast, due to the circumstances, were placed in secondary positions, "*gravitando em torno da figura solar (Cortez)* " and "*deixando o público indiferente aos esforços dos demais atores*" (Oct. 2000). However destructive Marciano's opinion, and proving that evaluating performance is not a measurable matter, we have the contrary opinion of another critic, Macksen Luiz from *Jornal do Brasil*, in "Encenação fluente e límpida", who exalted Cortez as having performed "*um Lear irrepreensível*" (5 May 2001).

Generally speaking, the reviewers set the tone for the public reception, but sometimes, it is important to add, without much consistency. Perhaps the Fool, who was to be interpreted by Cleide Yáconis, but was substituted by Gilberto Gawronski, could also be considered another "victim" of the press. Being an experienced actor, having his own theatrical company with a trajectory in Europe, Gawronski defined the character as having a "*humor crítico*" and as a role that is "*sempre um desafio para o ator*" due to the "*relacionamento que o Bobo precisa ter com o rei*" To Beth Néspoli, in "*Bobo de Shakespeare volta com humor crítico*", Gawronski confessed the amazing interaction he had with Cortez, mentioning that in act 1 scene 5, when he delivered lines 18-19 (translated by Daniels as: "*o gosto de uma maçã amarga é o mesmo de outra maçã amarga*"), the main actor looked at him and immediately started to cry. "*Eu então entendi*," Gawronski said, "*que é através do Bobo que as mais terríveis verdades são reveladas ao rei*." Gawronski, while pointing out the relevance of the interaction between the two characters for a good final result, concluded his interview with a remarkable sentence: "*Eu quero ser Raul Cortez*" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 22 Aug. 2000).

Many controversies surrounded the analysis of the different characters and respective performers, for instance Mariângela Alves de Lima praised the general performance in the Brazilian version of *Rei Lear,* especially the Fool, who, through Gawronski's performance, managed to ". . .*expressar, de uma maneira pungente, toda a franqueza e ironia que existe no*

personagem de Shakespeare" (*O Estado de São Paulo*, 22 Sep. 2000*).* According to her words Gawronski was then "*capaz de estabelecer um vínculo entre a grandeza e a decadência do rei*" However, a few weeks later, after allowing the play to run for a couple of weeks, the same newspaper published Lima's new review which radically changed her previous concepts: "*O Bobo*," performed by the same Gilberto Gawronski, is now considered as "*muito confiante e tendo muitos problemas em sua performance burlesca e sentimental*." At the same time Cordelia (Bianca Castanho) seems to be "*muito insegura e parecendo apavorada no palco*" (8 Sep. 2000).

Gilberto Gawronski as the Fool

Although the fact that Daniels had sometimes to deal with Raul Cortez's desire for applause and personal recognition, one cannot omit the actor's admitted respect for the director: "*Eu tive muita sorte em re encontrar Ron Daniels, um amigo desde o início da minha carreira, um brasileiro com uma esplêndida trajetória fora do Brasil, dirigindo a Royal Shakespeare Company na Inglaterra. Como eu poderia desperdiçar uma oportunidade*

dessas?" (*Bravo!* Aug. 2000). Here as elsewhere during the process of creation of characters, Cortez associates Daniels with Europe, a fact that perhaps explains the difficulties the actor had in submitting to a production that would involve many Brazilian aesthetic choices.

Daniels consent (or not) to offer Cortez a freedom to shine seems most certain when we turn to another controversial aspect of the production, which was the decision to strip Raul Cortez naked during the storm scene. However implicit in the text: "Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here" (3.4.122-123), translated as: "*Venham, desabotoem aqui*," it is remarkable that no other Brazilian production of *King Lear* before Daniels/Cortez felt compelled to display to the public a naked king. If the moment was startling on stage, it was at the same time carefully restrained, the nudity being noticeable through a dim light, providing further opportunity for the actor to impress the audience, a chance that neither Paulo Autran nor Sérgio Britto dared to risk in previous years.

However daring Raul Cortez seemed to be, as we have seen, in other occasions his personal taste as a performer was very traditional. As an illustration we have Daniels' complaints about the fact that the actor wanted a "*produção de primeiro mundo*" (Daniels' quotations), and thus his (Cortez's) disappointment to discover that, according to the director's own words, "*não era isso que eu pretendia"*. As we read from the letter dated 26 June 2002: *"King Lear parecia muito brasileiro. . . tudo que ele [Raul Cortez] queria era um teatro Elizabetano clássico, com golas de rendas, tudo baseado nos trajes usados na época de Shakespeare. . . Foi uma luta constante e subversiva. . ."* The evidences show that the actor did not very easily submit to the director's choices, and not even the discreet soundtrack performed by the Brazilian group Armorial, chosen to support and give coherence to the Brazilian production of the play, pleased Cortez's personal taste, as mentioned before.

Despite the importance of the presence of Cortez in the staging of the play, some of the other characters were also recognized as having produced good performances. In Macksen Luiz's article, we find comments on the premiere of *Rei Lear* in Rio de Janeiro at the Teatro Villa-Lobos: "Raul Cortez contains himself even in the storm scene, looking for a restrained use of gestures", while Gilberto Gawronski does not appeal to an excess of histrionics, being rather a 'serious' Fool. Referring to Lu Grimaldi (Goneril) and Christiane Tricerri (Regana), he stresses that they exaggerated their characters, while Bianca Castanho was an inexpressive Cordelia. Mário Camargo was considered too nervous as Gloucester, and Luiz Guilherme should have been more lucid as Kent. At the same time Macksen Luiz praises Rubens Caribé's energetic stage presence as Edgar, as well as Rogério Bandeira's rude Edmund. Finally the reviewer believed that Bartholomeu de Haro, Leonardo Franco and Mário Borges added almost nothing to the characters they performed.

Though it is obvious to speak of Raul Cortez as the name used to sell the entire project of producing K*ing Lear,* and that his was always the name that appeared first in the publicity material, it is undeniable that some other experienced and talented actors added weight and significance to the production. And yet, Cortez's frequent appearances on television and newspapers called attention to the actor himself, suggesting that the production was basically constructed around his opinions and his ideas. However important the main actor's presence, the selection of actors for a production is a process that always requires choices, and *King Lear* would not be different. In other words, most of the choices would not work without the guidance of the director who conducted the actors through the myriad of possibilities discovered during the rehearsals, since there is no way to ignore that *King Lear* deals with different and contrasting roles. The director basically suggests new interpretative possibilities to the actors from which they can make their choices, but actors have to be responsive and

able to work creatively on their own. Indeed, when a young actor only responds to the text according to the director's inventions, not exploring his or her roles with wit and energy, part of the "artistry" of being a performer is vanished. That is perhaps what precisely explains why some of the supporting actors, as for instance the young Bianca Castanho, were consistently labeled as "inexpressive" by the critics.

At the same time, audience foreknowledge, what spectators already know about either the performer, as in the case of Cortez, a popular star image allied to fame, or the character to be performed, will always influence the reaction from the public. Thus, it is again inevitable to speak of Raul Cortez, whose presence on stage performing King Lear was easily recognizable and must have shifted the public's attention from the other characters, suggesting that their chances to exhibit their talent were strongly diminished. Therefore, the attempt to value or judge the actors by labeling them as "good" or "bad" is sometimes unclear, since different ways of presenting characters may vary in random patterns, but, as in all theatre work, audience reaction is an essential ingredient.

In his description of his performance of Hamlet, John Gielgud argues for a particular approach of the master actors: "just as a great teacher trains his pupils to adopt a correct method of study, and leads them towards the most sincere approach to an appreciation of style, so, it seems to me, an aspiring actor should be able to study these essentials from watching his masters in the craft." What they should learn, he suggests, comes "not from a great actor's mannerisms, or some brilliant personal expression of voice, but rather from the master's approach to character, and from every moment in his performance" (51-52).

Lawrence Olivier goes even further in his attempt to show that acting, like other kinds of professional activity, cannot be successful if only the "star qualities" are highly praised:

> To achieve true theatre, you can't have one man up front and the acolytes with their backs to the audience feeding the great star with lines as dull as dishwasher. What you

> must have is every character believing in himself and, therefore, contributing to the piece as a whole, placing and pushing the play in the right direction. The third spear carrier on the left must believe that the play is all about the third spear carrier on the left. I've always believed that. (22)

Of course, if Olivier is to be taken at his word, his performance was marked by a strong perception of the value of other actors' art and determined to show that all professionals might add interest to a given production. Raul Cortez's acting style, in contrast, seemed virtually to provide the audience with an excess of his presence, denying the surrounding actors a significant chance to reveal themselves as important characters, a fact that was greatly perceived by some critics. Marcio Marciano, for instance, regretted that Cortez himself occupied too much of the stage, failing to render the dignity the other characters have in the original play, "*mantendo-se indiferente aos esforços dos outros atores*" (*Bravo!* Oct. 2000). While Cortez was most likely to aspire to recognition as a master of his craft, which he certainly deserved, it is also fair to believe that theatre is basically the art of collaboration and, after all, all actors want to give rise to the possibility of establishing themselves as accomplished performers. Moreover, it is fair to believe that Shakespeare's plays were always conceived as actions imagined to live as a collaborative art that only evolves if the full potential of the text provides opportunities for the various characters to mingle and contrast.

Daniels certainly made some experiments in rehearsal methods to encourage creative imagination in his actors; however, and in contrast to this, he did not enunciate conceptual purposes when he started working: "*o ato de dirigir um grupo de atores é sempre um mistério que eu não pretendo entender completamente. Tudo que eu posso fazer é orientar o trabalho do ator* (. . .) *porque eu também já fui um ator*. (. . .) *diferente de pintar e compor m´sica, por exemplo, o teatro é a arte da colaboração*" (*O Estado de São Paulo* 15 Aug. 1998). However sincere, Daniels' efforts to render his conception of the play unified, working for both group

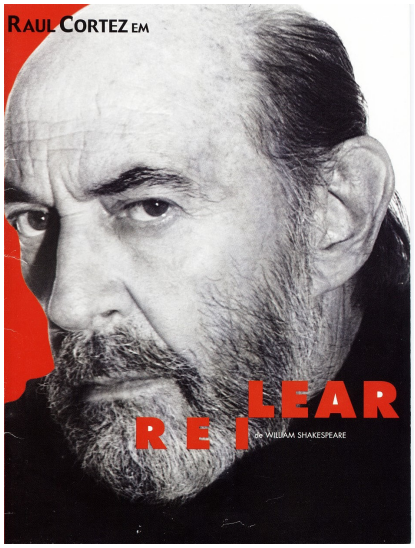
and individual effects, for many reasons, some of them discussed in previous pages, did not always succeed, since some of the actors did not receive critical recognition.

3.5 STAGE BUSINESS, RECEPTION AND OVERALL COHERENCE

As *Rei Lear* came alive in rehearsal, Daniels shaped and invented alternatives to help the elaboration of a stage-business to suit his and the main actor's view of the play, and effectively found a personal way of meeting the challenge. Cortez's ambition to perform Shakespeare and at the same time promote himself can already be detected on many occasions, and some decisions pointedly involved stage business. This is especially emphasized in the court scene, when through careful blocking and a change in the light effect, Cortez is directed to make an ostensibly bold entrance, clearly designed to draw the audience's attention to himself. The scene is provided with great ceremony, all of which involving choreographed movement: Cortez enters followed by all the courtiers, who discreetly move to a gloomy downstage, then the main actor steps to the front of the stage, all the light canons focused on his royal figure, significantly stares at the audience and waits for the applause which does not fail to be heard. In contrast, all the other actors in scene stay perfectly still and away from the main action, only moving to bow respectfully when the king turns his back to the public and pronounces his first lines: "*Peça ao rei da França e ao Duque de Borgonha / Que aguardem um momento / Por ora tratemos de assuntos mais sérios*" (1.1.35-37). By now, of course, the audience is also seriously prepared to witness the play.

In addition to all the characteristics of the stage business that surrounded the production of the 2000-2001 *King Lear,* and the means that were used to make it contemporary and entertaining, let us consider just one fact that might clearly denounce the

director's intentions. To illustrate, we should take a look at the cover of the programme for *Rei Lear* which shows an impressive black-and-white photo of Raul Cortez, photographed in three-quarter left profile against a red background. However, the fact that the actor is not wearing a crown, in an age that might be considered as overloaded with visual aids, is at least surprising. In practice, perhaps, the decision of giving (or not) a crown to the actor might rather be considered as a promotional campaign aimed to attract the public. Since contemporary productions mostly have to deal with the conventions that reproduce (or not) the collective structures in which the audience is inserted, it is useful to try to understand these negotiations. As stated by Peter Brook "It is only when the director is conscious of his role as the servant and exponent of his age will he be able to fix a standpoint which is in full agreement with the major forces shaping the characters of his epoch" (qtd. in Brown 10-11).



Raul Cortez (without a crown) at the cover of the programme.

As has been said, Cortez, at the time of the *Rei Lear* production was a well known actor, exhibiting a projection of power and popularity that enabled him to attract audiences even though he did not display any regal symbol. In this sense, the use of a crown on such a

valuable head could be considered an excess, allowing ambivalent responses. In particular, Daniels refers to "Brazilian kings" in his practice of locating Shakespeare in "our time," as being an immediate and not always desired presence: "*E reis? Há reis no Brasil? Além do rei Momo, claro que não – mas há homens poderosos, vaidosos, e ser rei é apenas emblema, fácil de aceitar"* (e-mail 11 May 2002, complete version at the Appendixes). Just as there is no coherence in Lear apart from power, so there is no coherence in Cortez's performance apart from the power with which he expresses himself and dominates the production.

While concerned with the general public understanding of the play, Daniels was at the same time providing a unique chance to a Brazilian ordinary audience to get in touch with a clear and target-shaped Shakespearean text. What can be inferred from that is the way the director seems to carve out an area in the discourse that he uniquely dominates in a non-rhetorical style. The production also offers plenty of instances when dramatic artifices seek to give a clear emphasis to certain characters, usually dealing with the possibilities of the text allied to a physical way of making a statement. Anyone who has witnessed the last appearance of Lear after Cordelia's death, and heard his howls instead of speech, knows the stunning effect the king's entrance has on audiences. That image reasserts the value of language, since in seeing the scene the public has seen all, at least all that theatre can offer. Daniels' version of the scene proposes the same validation that the text could have produced, for in directing Cortez to "speak what he feels" the director builds ties of sympathy that connect father and daughter and the human community surrounding them.

Probably the most important difference between the earlier studied contemporary productions of *Rei Lear* and the present one is that Ron Daniels, different from his predecessors, has always conceived *Rei Lear* as a play for a Brazilian contemporary audience. Besides, another notable aspect of Daniels' *Rei Lear* seldom commented on was its pedagogic

dimension. In retrospect, though it may be credited that the production was prepared and packaged as a commercial enterprise, it is well to emphasize that the general result contemplated a big slice of the general public, especially students and senior citizens, who would not be able to attend a night at the theatre if it were not for the substantial discounts offered.

The overall reception of the production, insofar that it can be reconstructed from the records, mostly reviews from the press, was positive. Daniels gave Shakespeare's story of a king's coming of age a single plot line and a new emphasis. First, there was notorious expectation, not unique to this production or this period, as regards coming to terms with a Shakespearean play, particularly one performed by Raul Cortez, a well known television name. Part of the reception was greatly conditioned by the name of Cortez, and reviewers were unable to take *Rei Lear* as just another production, if for no other reason than that the names of Cortez and Daniels were associated with it. Most of the coverage had the effect to associate Cortez himself with "royalty". On 24 August, 2000, *Jornal da Tarde* published a two-page elaborate photographic review, and Cortez himself graced the first page in costume as *King Lear* surrounded by his daughters. When we turn to the article we learn that the show that had just opened in São Paulo is already treated as a matter of great cultural significance: "*Trono do Rei Lear é de Raul Cortez",* announced the headlines. "*Em Rei Lear*," Alberto Guzik tells us in the same article, "*a combinação de uma obra prima e um grande ator no seu apogeu é certamente um dos eventos artísticos do ano.Cortez produziu um show raramente visto em palcos brasileiros*"

At the same time, it is important to note the heritage affiliation of Daniels' as a Brazilian director who worked abroad and achieved considerable respect as a prestigious Shakespearean director. After 15 years directing the Royal Shakespeare Company, Daniels

was certainly aware that no other Brazilian director would have his experience in directing a Shakespearean play. And yet, Daniels himself was directing *King Lear* for the first time.

The decision to insert Shakespeare into a local reality should always be, in Daniels opinion, the most desirable goal, in order to establish a live contact that is free and natural with the audience: "*Primeiro nós temos que encarar/desafiar Shakespeare à nossa própria maneira. E isso deve ser feito dentro da nossa cultura, tendo expectativas peculiares*", he declared in a private letter. A concern with political approaches to Shakespeare involved still other delimitations. A brief statement in the above mentioned letter clarifies the director's intentions: "*Nós temos que ir um pouco além do que apenas explorar a superfície do texto. . . Quando eu vim ao Brasil tudo o que eu queria fazer era produzir um Shakespeare brasileiro e liberto das tradições inglesas. . . isto significa que é através do texto que podemos finalmente descobrir a verdade de Shakespeare. . .*" (26 June 2002).

Interviews and stirring commentaries began to appear regularly in the pages of the most prestigious magazines and newspapers in Brazil weeks before the play's opening: "*Os primeiros aplausos já podem ser ouvidos*", said an enthusiastic Beth Néspoli, from *O Estado de São Paulo*, on 28 June 2000, when the play was still being rehearsed, as an illustration of how deeply involved with the press the production seemed to be. Beth Néspoli added the information that Raul always wanted to perform Hamlet, a chance he missed when he was young, and now that he was older he could not waste the opportunity to perform King Lear. In particular Cortez mentioned to the journalist that he and Daniels met in 1998, when the director was in Brazil for a series of workshops, and at that occasion they planned to produce the play together.

In an interesting article, Marici Salomão, another reviewer for the *Estado de São Paulo*, treats the production as a matter of great cultural importance: "Cortez ensaia Lear com

a calma dos sábios" (19 July 2000). Any reader would soon notice that what followed in fact was a profile of the actor himself, justifying the opening sub-heading claiming that, among other things, "*quando o ator (Cortez) está num processo criativo ele gosta de ouvir música clássica, especialmente Bach e Beethoven*". One of the photo-captions even describes Cortez as "*cavaleiro Andaluz*" alluding to his black outfit, "*cercado por várias versões de King Lear, sendo a primeira delas original (sic) e as demais escritas em inglês antigo e moderno"* .

Other reviews appeared, primarily in some national magazines, but mostly in São Paulo newspapers, where the production had its official national premiere. Although being mostly positive, the chorus of praise occasionally included a few sour notes; one of the reviews, published by the aforementioned magazine *Bravo!* in October 2000, could not be more destructive. Marcio Marciano, who signed the review, characterized the production as being only a show business event, seeking financial rewards.

All in all, however, Ron Daniels' *Rei Lear* has gradually come to be recognized both as one of the most intelligent and imaginative of Brazilian Shakespearean productions and as one of Cortez's finest achievements as an actor. We might say that Daniels' *Rei Lear* was well received by the popular press and, as stated before, it was perhaps inevitable that it would be used as a means of measuring Cortez's ability to perform two different genres at the same time, i.e. a very popular actor performing a soap opera on television and Shakespeare on the stage. Certainly the critical reception of this *Rei Lear* took place in a somewhat different context, considering previous productions of the same play (see chapter two). The staging of *Rei Lear* marked a moment when Raul Cortez, pretty much written off by the press, and Ron Daniels, a director with the status of being successful in Europe, decided to join forces to produce a Shakespearean play accessible and entertaining. At a certain level, we could argue, the releases delivered by the press seemed to have sometimes an emotional resonance, helping

to ensure responses in the audience, being most of them likely to push a great number of playgoers inside the theatre. However we wish to gauge the social impact, the cultural significance, or the aesthetic merits of Daniels' production, it was undoubtedly a popular success, running for six months in São Paulo and subsequently going on tour. In conclusion, to quote Barbara Heliodora, attending a night at the theatre watching Daniels' *Rei Lear* was a chance that "should not be missed".

CONCLUSION: "IS THIS THE PROMIS'D END?"

. . .once again, the fierce dispute
Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
Must I burn through; once more humbly assay
The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit.

John Keats

Many scholars have attempted to write about Shakespeare's life and work, several books considering how to read the playtexts and what questions to ask in order to understand what is happening on stage. Editions of the plays often provide commentaries to clarify the reader, and perhaps suggest implications that the playgoer would then be able to check against the opinions of selected authors and critics. A reader can purchase a book on each play, or in a single volume find many "guides", all telling how the play works, defining central ideas or issues of contemporary relevance. In some ways it has become easier to join the critical debate than to experience the play imaginatively for oneself. But in retrospect, such an exploration of a play like *King Lear* should be more than the reading of any literary text, and as has been said, plays lie open for active exploration, for the audience to enter the enactment in imagination, and to discover for themselves details that can only be noticed inside the walls of a theatre. In simpler terms, by definition theatre is the place where people "meet". A play like *King Lear*, in all its variants, articulates that wish, at the same time providing a link from the present to the past.

According to Halio, "whatever the effects that are introduced to enhance the production, we respond first and finally to the characters, language, and action in Shakespeare's plays" (Understanding 85). However, answers to many questions are not readily available. Rather than claiming to provide such answers, my main goal has been to provide examples and then explore the implications of production choices. I would argue that it is

important to consider staging alternatives that do not repeat tired old ones. Members of the audience should feel free to supply the context for whatever catches their imagination and be prepared to enjoy new discoveries as a way to make each performance a collective and at the same time unique experience.

In choosing to examine a play like *King Lear* and some of its possibilities (and impossibilities) in performance, I knew I would leave unrealized part of what I proposed in the beginning. Maybe the word "examine" should better be used when and if related to scientific specificity, and not to an aesthetic appraisal of a Shakespearean play. I prefer to argue that a study like this has little or nothing to do with scientific scrutiny. However, I see my inability to present evidences for each and every one of my provisional readings not as a weakness but as a strength, for a study of this kind is much like an early rehearsal, in which director and actors research and sound out the text for possible signification. If *King Lear* is challenging by the multiple possibilities inherent in its lines, it is also true that all the study and criticism in the world cannot make the production of a Shakespeare play exciting unless it communicates with and signifies for an audience.

At the same time, productions of *King Lear* must always wrestle with the tensions between the public-political context, for it seems that the cathartic effect of this play does its work in various ways. The explanation must be that the themes of *King Lear* reflect a universal tragedy, demanding the audience to think about the horrifying image to which humanity can be reduced. Thus it is not surprising that sometimes even the smallest of changes or adjustments in the text can have significant implications on the stage. As for instance we learned that part of Tate's reason for adapting and creating a "happy ending" for the play was not simply to cater to the audience, but to create a text less sensitive to political issues of the time. In a similar way, due to the mental illness of George III, and in order not to suggest

parallels with the royal family, the staging of the play was discontinued in the early nineteenth century, at least until 1820, when the king died.

Such a historical concern can also be seen in Tereza Amaral's characterization of the 1975-Brazilian-production, accounting for major disappointments connected with political practices. She, as a director, was limited, confined by space and time and the boundaries of her own perception. A comparable effect is provided by Ron Daniels especially when, in his effort to create a contemporary Brazilian production, he enables the playgoer to establish strong connections with the text, which in the director's own words "*pode ser interpretado de tantas maneiras diferentes*".

Ron Daniels repeatedly locates the force of performance in the text, as for instance when responding to Jefferson Del Rios about the selection of words to be used in his (Daniels') Brazilian translation of the play: "*É importante que ela [a tradução] seja completamente compreensível. Esse é o ponto de partida. É claro que, se você for ao teatro na Inglaterra, provavelmente não entenderá tudo. Não importa, o resto tem de ser compreendido pela ação teatral"* (Bravo Aug. 2000).

Indeed, that seems to be one of the Daniels' primary concerns: translating text as clusters into stage images that produce a coherent whole. His purpose of producing a play like *King Lear* is not so much to transform but to approach, to underline things that are permanent. The text that is presented to be heard by the audience must give the impression that it was written today, "*para o público brasileiro de hoje*". There are no literary or unusual words, so that the language becomes a natural means of contemporary communication and expression.

By contrast, if language is important, we cannot help but realize that all signs that convey choices, even gestures and inflections that may accompany ambiguous words, must be taken into account. To exemplify I would point to the occasion on which the words become

superfluous. In the final scenes of the 2000 – 2001 Brazilian production, the suffering King only howls inarticulate sounds as an emblem of human sacrifice. The language is not necessary, everything is understood through theatrical action, offering as it does the most potent image of the play. It makes the audience endure the emotional weight of Cordelia's and Lear's deaths.

This, however, does not mean that the play and its various productions, being some of them mentioned in my thesis, have always been perceived in the same way. Ultimately we find in Shakespeare only what we bring to him and he gives us back our own values, since no production can be separated from its context: the Shakespeare admired in the Elizabethan period or in some other time and place was not perceived in the same way. Only a thorough analysis of a classical play like *King Lear* and its significance in relation to our time would result in a meaningful contribution to contemporary performance criticism. It is indeed the promised end. In this sense it would be appropriate to conclude by pointing to what lies ahead, since *King Lear* will be constantly reinvented to produce new stage representations raising issues merely glanced at in this thesis. Finally, and, as it were, paraphrasing Ron Daniels: the life a play has on stage is completely different than the life it might have had in a master's thesis.

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APPENDIXES:

APPENDIX A:

FICHA TÉCNICA DA PRODUÇÃO *REI LEAR* DIRIGIDA POR MARIA TEREZA AMARAL EM 1975:

LEAR: LUIZA BARRETO LEITE

CORDÉLIA E EDGAR: EDUARDO COUTINHO

BOBO, REI DA FRANÇA E DUQUE DE BORGONHA: MARCOS DE ASSIS

EDMUNDO: GILSON DA CRUZ

KENT: JAIR ARRUDA

REGAN: MÁRIO CÉSAR MARQUES

GLOCESTER: FERNANDO PALILOP

GONERIL: MARCO UBIRATAN

CENÁRIO E FIGURINOS: RENATO BERNARDI

ADEREÇOS: MAGDA MODESTO

ASSISTENTE DE DIREÇÃO: NIETTE LIMA

DIREÇÃO GERAL: MARIA TEREZA AMARAL

APPENDIX B

FICHA TÉCNICA DA PRODUÇÃO *REI LEAR* DIRIGIDA POR CELSO NUNES EM 1983:

LEAR: SÉRGIO BRITTO

GONERIL: YARA AMARAL

REGANA: ARICLÊ PEREZ

CORDÉLIA: FERNANDA TORRES

KENT: PAULO GOULART

BOBO: ARI FONTOURA

GLÓSTER: ABRAHÃO FARE

EDGAR: JOSÉ MAYER

EDMUNDO: NEY LATORRACA

CURINGA: LUIZ OTÁVIO BURNIER

DUQUE DE ALBÂNIA: JOSÉ DE FREITAS

OSVALDO: JITMAN VIBRANOVSKI

DUQUE DE CORNUALHA: ROBERTO FROTA

DUQUE DE BORGONHA: LAURI PRIETO

TRADUÇÃO DE MILLÔR FERNANDES

DIREÇÃO: CELSO NUNES

CENOGRAFIA: PAULO MAMEDE

ILUMINAÇÃO: AURÉLIO SIMONI E LUIS PAULO NENÉM

ASSISTENTE DE DIREÇÃO PARA O TEXTO: JOSÉ A. BEZERRA (UNICAMP)

APPENDIX C

FICHA TÉCNICA PARA A PRODUÇÃO *REI LEAR* DIRIGIDA POR ULYSSES CRUZ 1996:

LEAR: PAULO AUTRAN

CORDÉLIA: RACHEL RIPANI

GONERIL: KARIN RODRÍGUEZ

REGAN: SUSANA FAINI

BOBO: MARCOS SUCHARA

KENT: BARTHOLOMEU DE HARO

GLOUCESTER: HÉLIO CÍCERO

EDMUND: ADRIANO GARIB

TRADUÇÃO: MARCOS DAUD

CENOGRAFIA: HÉLIO EICHBAUER

FIGURINOS: ELENA TOSCANO

COREOGRAFIA/ARTES MARCIAIS: DANI HU E RICARDO RIZZO

TRILHA SONORA: JOHN BOULDER

DIREÇÃO: ULYSSES CRUZ

APPENDIX D

FICHA TÉCNICA DA PRODUÇÃO *KING LEAR* DIRIGIDA POR RON DANIELS 2000-2001:

REI LEAR: RAUL CORTEZ

GONERIL: LU GRIMALDI

REGANA: LIGIA CORTEZ

CORDÉLIA: BIANCA CASTANHO

BOBO: GILBERTO GAWRONSKI

GLOSTER: MÁRIO CÉSAR CAMARGO

KENT: LUIZ GUILHERME

EDGAR: CACO CIOCLER

EDMUNDO: ROGÉRIO BANDEIRA

DUQUE DE CORNUÁLIA: LEONARDO FRANCO

DUQUE DE ALBÂNIA: MÁRIO BORGES

OSWALDO: BARTHOLOMEU DE HARO

CENOGRAFIA E FIGURINOS: J.C. SERRONI

ILUMINAÇÃO: DOMINGOS QUINTILIANO

SONOPLASTIA: RAUL TEIXEIRA

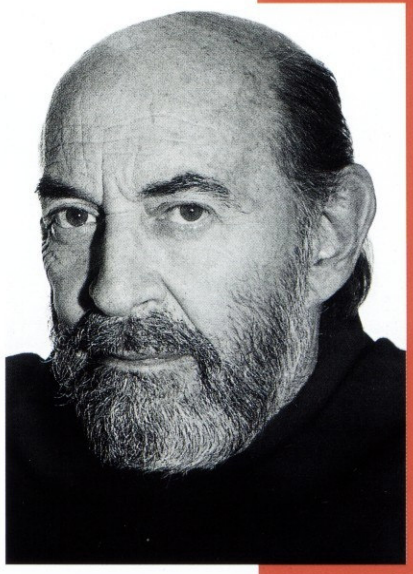
DIREÇÃO/TRADUÇÃO/ADAPTAÇÃO: RON DANIELS

APPENDIX E:

PROGRAMME'S PAGE OF

KING LEAR DIRECTED BY RON DANIELS

Encenar Shakespeare



é a maior realização para um ator. E para mim chegou o momento de encenar uma de suas maiores criações – o REI LEAR, esse "personagem dos personagens", com o qual sempre sonhei e para o qual venho me preparando desde que me conheço como ator.

Foi através de minha filha, Lígia Cortez, que o momento se fez propício. Foi através dela que reencontrei o diretor brasileiro Ron Daniels, da Royal Shakespeare Company, que veio ao Brasil especialmente para a montagem da peça. A equipe completou-se com J.C.Serroni, e hoje reúne 151 profissionais e 25 talentosos atores que vieram somar-se a nós, prontos a enfrentar qualquer tempestade.

Com Lear, a roda da fortuna gira e um mundo é posto do avesso. Esse é o grande desafio: interpretar um homem que passa da extrema realeza e poder para o total desamparo, que abandona a razão (insana) para alcançar a loucura (lúcida), e que, literalmente, se descobre – põe-se a nu – para reencontrar a sua verdade, a herança de seu fim. É esse mergulho na compreensão da alma humana que Shakespeare nos convida realizar, e é isso que me interessa indagar incorporar a cada dia, a cada espetáculo, com o que eu sei de mim e com o que eu acho que sei de minha profissão.

Por isso,

Obrigado Ron,

Obrigado aos atores e atrizes, meus companheiros,

Obrigado aos técnicos e a todos os envolvidos na produção,

Obrigado por esse momento mágico e cheio de solidariedade desse nosso encontro.

Obrigado à Volkswagen por permitir que esse sonho acalentado desde muito cedo hoje se torne um acontecimento.

Acontecimento que ofereço ao público com amor, a grandeza e a magnitude de Shakespeare, para que venham nos acalentar e acalentar esse rei que, da catástrofe, aprende e nos ensina a reconhecer o que há de mais humano e perene em cada um de nós.

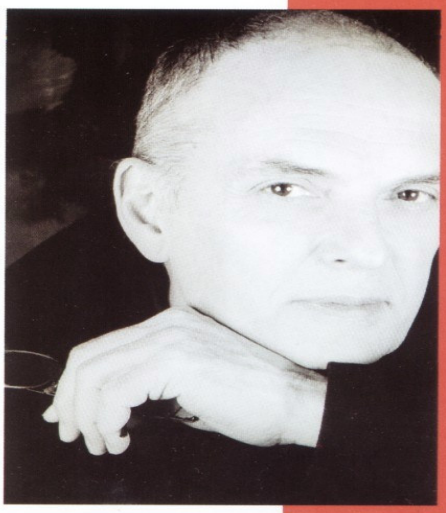
RAUL CORTEZ

APPENDIX F:

PROGRAMME'S PAGE OF

KING LEAR DIRECTED BY RON DANIELS

Trechos de uma Carta a uma Amiga...



Nosso ponto de partida foi o texto. A peça é maravilhosa. Precisávamos de uma versão inteiramente nossa, acessível, que nos permitisse compartilhar da vida dos personagens, de seus relacionamentos e conflitos, de sua grandeza e mesquinhez sem embolação ou dificuldades de compreensão.

Precisávamos mesmo fazer de conta (como sempre!) que nosso autor acaba de escrever esta sua obra-prima, que REI LEAR nunca antes foi montada e, mais do que isso, que ela foi escrita em português, para ser falada por atores brasileiros e ouvida por uma platéia brasileira com gozo e prazer.

Segundo John Barton, uma das maiores autoridades no assunto (e um dos grandes encenadores da Royal Shakespeare Company) o famoso "pentâmetro iâmbico", o verso shakesperiano de dez sílabas, é a maneira natural de falar inglês! Vamos procurar essa naturalidade na nossa versão para que Shakespeare possa falar diretamente aos nossos corações.

Façamos de conta que Shakespeare é brasileiro. E assim talvez possamos perceber o que ele, na sua compreensão, tem a dizer sobre nós mesmos e nossa humanidade. Mas não vamos "localizar" o REI LEAR especificamente no Brasil ou mesmo em algum período histórico determinado. Não trata disso. A encenação deverá ser mais abstrata. Universal, mas percebida através da imaginação brasileira. Ela terá quatro movimentos: a civilização, bela e orgulhosa; a tempestade que traz o caos e que revela o homem em toda a sua nudez; o pós-tempestade, quando a ordem desaparece e a loucura está desenfreada, e finalmente o período da guerra e a restauração. Os velhos agora estão mortos. É a hora dos jovens: cabe a eles criar um mundo novo, através da compaixão e do carinho aprendidos no desamparo e no sofrimento.

Onde está a verdade? Perguntam os personagens desta peça. Quem somos e como podemos nos conhecer, se tanto nos ocultamos de nós mesmos? E como podemos enxergar se nossos olhos parecem sempre nos enganar?

Vamos então, como diz Edgar, como peregrinos numa longa caminhada e que Shakespeare nos conduza ao encontro da verdade de nós mesmos e de um ao outro.

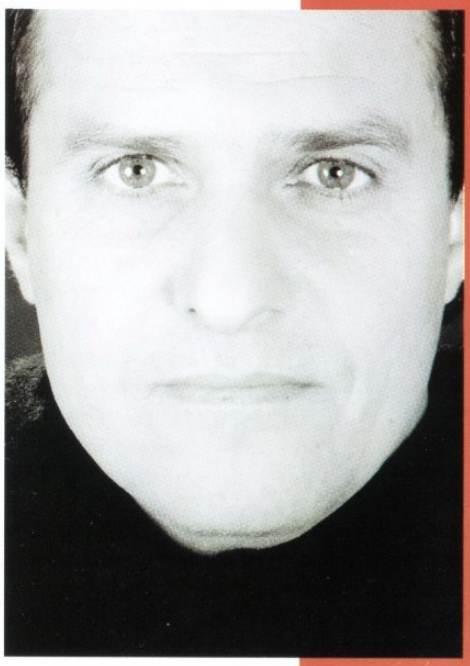
RON DANIELS

APPENDIX G:

PROGRAMME'S PAGE OF

KING LEAR DIRECTED BY RON DANIELS

O Espaço de Rei Lear



A cenografia para o Lear de Ron Daniels e Raul Cortez acompanha o despojamento do trabalho de ambos – limpo, direto, humano, sem floreios ou supérfluos. Procurei emprestar à cenografia um reflexo da maturidade e objetividade das quais a encenação está impregnada.

Há quatro momentos muito claros que mostram o caminho percorrido por Lear, do requinte e empostação da corte até o caos final, sem truques, onde tudo é revelado durante a guerra civil – o desmoronamento de todos os valores em busca da humanidade.

O primeiro momento: a civilização. O velho rei e sua corte, a pompa, o cerimonial, os movimentos marcados, a ordem, o piso desenhado, o paredão de fundo na vertical. A segurança e a proteção delineadas pelo grande painel de fundo.

O segundo momento: a tempestade. O paredão começa a desmoronar. O homem fica desabrigado, desamparado, uma mera criatura perante a natureza revolta, violenta, sem dó. A desordem, a traição, mas também a lealdade. Criam-se novos espaços. Um, sob o novo piso, onde se escondem os miseráveis. Outro, sobre ele, épico e elevado, sustentado por dois fios apenas, onde a imagem de Lear vagueia em busca de proteção. Seu mundo começa a ficar inseguro, quase insustentável.

O terceiro momento: o amanhecer após a tempestade. Tudo se acalma e estamos nas escarpas brancas de Dover. A ordem invertida, o caos, o mundo da imaginação e da loucura. O despedaçamento de tudo o que é velho. A volta à infância e à inocência. Incoerência. Sofrimento. O grande paredão está agora ao rés do chão, coberto por destroços vindos do fundo branco estraçalhado.

O quarto momento: a guerra civil. O homem armado, a luta entre irmãos, o assassinato de irmãs. Prisão e morte do velho rei. O renascimento do amor, o fim da vida, um novo amanhecer, uma nova ordem, um novo mundo.

No lugar das escarpas brancas de Dover surge um piso cinzento, iluminado por luzes avermelhadas. Acendem-se os barris com fogo que surge forte, para queimar o passado e a antiga ordem.

As estruturas do teatro são reveladas. Estamos no grande espaço nu, despojado, sem disfarces, prontos para uma nova era.

J.C. SERRONI

APPENDIX H:

RON DANIELS' E-MAILS

Terra Mail – versão para impressão
De: RonDaniels000@aol.com
Para: borgmann@terra.com.br
Data: Sexta-feira, 11 de Maio de 2002 12:22
Assunto: Re: Rei Lear

Mensagem:

Prezada Marina

Vou tentar responder algumas de suas perguntas: 1) Não é proposital que o Raul apareça em certas fotos sem a coroa. Acontece que algumas fotos de publicidade e do programa foram tiradas durante os ensaios, quando os figurinos e adereços ainda não estavam totalmente prontos. Em fotos mais recentes, na fachada do teatro e em alguns jornais do Rio o Raul tem coroa. Observe. 2) Quando estiver de volta a Nova Iorque vou procurar o texto da minha tradução/adaptação para lhe mandar. Você pode contar com isso. Quanto ao resto, manual de palco, vídeo, etc., nem sei se existem. Para isso é melhor você falar com o João Federicci. Eu não me interessei. No entanto o Estadão e a Folha publicaram alguns artigos explicando as minhas idéias. Alguns valem a pena ser lidos. 3) Acho que já ficou claro para você que não me interessa a noção de teatro elizabetano e que considero Shakespeare um autor moderno e brasileiro!! Isso significa que acho que ele fala diretamente à nossa realidade Isso significa que ele fala diretamente à nossa realidade (. . .) E reis? O que você acha dos reis no Brasil? Além do rei Momo, claro que não há. Mas há homens poderosos no Brasil e ser rei é apenas um emblema muito fácil de aceitar. 4) Eu te convido: venha ao Rio ver o espetáculo. Além do Lear há mais uns quatro ou cinco Shakespeares em cartaz, bons e maus. Mas estão lá.

Shakespeare in performance é melhor no teatro do que na sala de aula ou no papel, você sabe. E como diz a Heliodora, é uma oportunidade que não se deveria perder.

Um abraço. Ron.

Terra Mail – versão para impressão

De: RonDaniels000@aol.com
Para: borgmann@terra.com.br
Data: 24/06/02 12:08
Assunto: Re: About the king, again

Mensagem:

Nossa, Marina. Quantas perguntas… não sei nem por onde começar. Acho que devo dizer em primeiro lugar que cada um deve encarar/enfrentar Shakespeare de uma maneira própria. E dentro da nossa cultura, de nossas expectativas.

Bárbara Heliodora, que a classe teatral considera profundamente reacionária, tem expectativas, não, são exigências de um rigor "shakesperiano" e poético que tem raízes na sua luta contra o mau gosto, o oportunismo que ela vê em torno de si. Por outro lado, um crítico como Michael Billington, do The Guardian, que está profundamente entediado com um Shakespeare tradicional inglês, anseia por uma interpretação radical que possa reinventar Shakespeare completamente. Ele adorou a montagem de Macbeth do diretor espanhol Calixto Bieto, (eu também ADOREI! No final Macbeth se levanta e dá um tiro na cabeça do chatinho

do Malcolm! (que alegria me deu). Tenho certeza que a Bárbara teria achado o espetáculo abominável.

Cada um na sua, com o que acha importante, no que acha que vai ressoar com sua cultura e com o seu público. Shakespeare vai sobreviver a nós todos e a qualquer idiotice que fizermos com suas peças! E se você quer mesmo saber, tudo e qualquer coisa que fizermos com suas peças é mera idiotice!

Veja só, eu quero ir um pouco além da superfície. Veja só o nosso Rei Lear: veja as contradições dentro do próprio espetáculo. Eu sou um diretor brasileiro radicado no exterior – no mundo do Michael Billington, se você preferir. No entanto, quando fui para o Brasil queria montar um Shakespeare brasileiro, livre das tradições inglesas, -- embora eu tenha sido criado no Royal Shakespeare Company -- e isso apenas significa para mim que é através do texto que encontramos a verdade de Shakespeare. Este é o ponto de partida e o ponto de chegada também. Acho que qualquer interpretação é válida, contanto que encontre sua raiz nas palavras do Velho.

Por outro lado, o gosto teatral do Raul, a sua expectativa, apesar do seu trabalho com diretores maravilhosos como o Zé Celso (As Boas, etc) e Antunes, é muito tradicional. O que o Raul queria era um espetáculo de "primeiro mundo", de âmbito "internacional". A sua primeira reação perante a minha tradução foi de medo, pois segundo ele estava brasileira demais. Nunca entendeu o caboclo do Edgar! Nem o candomblé do Edmundo. Nunca se sentiu confortável com a musica nordestina do quarteto Armorial nem tampouco com os figurinos femininos baseados na Maria Bonita. O que o Raul queria era fazer um teatro clássico, tradicional, elizabetano, com golinhas rendadas, baseadas naquelas pinturas contemporâneas do Shakespeare... Foi uma luta constante, subversiva...

Marina, diga-se de passagem que apesar das belíssimas montagens do diretor Ninagawa, até mesmo os japoneses queriam ver um Shakespeare europeu, de calças compridas e nunca de kimono!!! Vê se dá para agüentar!!! Eles, (os japoneses) gostaram muito de ver o meu Titus Andronicos "moderno" e inglês, mas não aprovaram quando Tamora e seus filhos quando apareceram perante o louco Titus como a Vingança, Estupro e Assassinato vestidos de kimonos brancos, belíssimos! Não, não não, tem que ser coisa européia...

O resultado foi que aqui, no nosso Lear decidi incorporar ativamente essas contradições dentro do próprio espetáculo e fazer delas a estética/política da nossa interpretação. É claro que você lembra como o Lear começava: como se fosse mesmo teatrão, coisa do TBC antigo, bem formal impostado, com aqueles figurinos "clássicos" – ai como o Raul gostava de sua manta vermelha, de sua coroa! Mas aos poucos o teatrão ia desmoronando, não é? Aquele cenário tombava e atrás não tinha nada, só as parede nuas e pobres do teatro. Os figurinos também, você notou, iam se transformando em coisas de rua, de Brasil contemporâneo. O espetáculo então mergulhava dentro de uma realidade brasileira, moderna.

Mas o Raul queria morrer com aquela camisola branca. Insistiu. Nem pijama queria! Tinha que ser aquela merda daquela camisola!!! OK. No problem! Que fique de camisola trágica, clássica, com aquela garotada toda em torno dele, a nova e bela geração, com jeans rasgados, pobres, sem pretensão a nada... Que contradição viva! Que beleza!

Um grande abraço!

Ron.