

“GROWN TO SUCH EXCESS”: THREE BRAZILIAN RENDITIONS OF *ROMEO AND JULIET*

“CHEGOU A TAL RIQUEZA”: TRÊS VERSÕES BRASILEIRAS DE ROMEU E
JULIETA

Maria Clara Versiani Galery

Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto

mclara.galery@ufop.edu.br

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7098-2156>

ABSTRACT: This article examines three Brazilian translations of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* rendered on stage in the last two decades of the twentieth century, in three very different contexts: Antunes Filho’s adaptation, which enacted a subtle protest against the crumbling military dictatorship when the play was staged under his direction in 1984; Grupo Galpão’s internationally famous production in 1992, which inserts the play in the *mambembe* tradition and the rural context of Minas Gerais; and Ariano Suassuna’s rewriting of a booklet version of the story of the lovers, translating the play into the Brazilian Northeast code of honor. The theoretical framework of this discussion relies on concepts such as hybridity, cultural memory and identity.

KEYWORDS: Translation; Cultural Memory; Brazilian theatre; Shakespeare; *Romeo and Juliet*.

RESUMO: O artigo examina três traduções brasileiras de *Romeu e Julieta*, de Shakespeare, encenadas nas duas últimas décadas do século vinte, em três contextos bastante diferentes: a adaptação de Antunes Filho, que encena um protesto sutil contra a ditadura militar decadente ainda em poder quando a peça foi montada sob sua direção em 1984; a produção internacionalmente famosa criada pelo Grupo Galpão em 1992, que insere a peça na tradição *mambembe* e no contexto rural de Minas Gerais; e a reescrita por Ariano Suassuna de uma versão cordel da história dos amantes, traduzindo a peça para o código de honra do Nordeste brasileiro. O arcabouço teórico dessa discussão faz uso de conceitos como hibridismo, memória cultural e identidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tradução; Memória cultural; Teatro Brasileiro; Shakespeare; *Romeu e Julieta*.

NEGOTIATING IDENTITY

Shakespeare’s growing popularity in the Brazilian stage started in the 1980’s and the interest in the English poet has been accompanied by an intercultural approach to the translation and production of his plays. This essay examines the multi-layered process of translating Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* for the stage in three very different Brazilian contexts at the end of the twentieth century. These productions fused and brought into contact diverse fields of cultural memory, both popular and canonic, recycling and re-affirming different strata of active memory simultaneously present in Brazilian culture.

Translation is a multi-dimensional process that promotes a dialogue between cultures.

However, as Susan Bassnett points out, texts participate in a network of power relations, where their production and transmittal are not isolated from the manner this network has shaped and continues to define our world and its inequities (Bassnett, 1998). Asymmetrical relations of power do not contribute to a fair, balanced dialogue. In this sense, there are similarities between translation and colonization, for the translated text and the colony have in common their status as derivative spaces. Both occupy marginal positions: the relation between translation and the “original” is analogous to that of the colony to the metropolis. The translated text is, undeniably, a vehicle for the transmission of the metropolis’s culture. It is important to remember that translation, etymologically, means “carried from one place to another”. Thus, unless the colony develops a strategy for the appropriation of texts and cultural models imported from the metropolis – and in some cases imposed by the metropolis –, it will remain peripheral and inferior.

What is the role of translation for the definition of cultural identity? Self-conscious awareness of imported European culture is a fundamental issue in Latin American critical reflection. As Roberto Schwarz pointed out, the verification of “the artificial, inauthentic and imitative nature of our cultural life” is part of the “malaise” which lies within a culture fostered in the shadow of the European canon, where anguish over European influence has assumed various guises: aesthetic movements as diverse as romanticism, naturalism, and modernism (derived, ironically from their European counterparts) have made national identity their centerpiece (Schwarz, 1988, p. 77). Indeed, the question of a Latin American cultural specificity, according to Silviano Santiago (2001), emphasizes the need for a “space in between”, where an opening emerges between model and copy. As he argues, rather than copying the texts that Europeans exported to the New World, Latin American artists and intellectuals need to divert from the norm and inscribe their difference. Only then is it possible to move beyond the predicament of the center-periphery binary.

These ideas formulate an approach to translation which moves away from colonial imposition, forced assimilation and cultural mimicry. Instead of acting as a servile transmission of hegemonic texts, translation needs to promote an occasion for conversation, resistance and transformation. It needs to preserve a sense of identity in the asymmetrical context where neo and postcolonial relations are negotiated. Such a framework is found in Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropófago*. Written in 1928, the *Manifesto* provides a provocative metaphor for the construction of Brazilian identity, relying on the metaphor of an ancient practice of the indigenous people prior to the arrival of Europeans. Anthropophagy, which differs from cannibalism, was a ritual and totemic act of consuming human flesh, performed in order to assimilate the qualities of the enemy warriors. Andrade’s *Manifesto* presents “a reflection about the possibility of creating a genuine national culture, an attack on acritical imitation of foreign models, and a critical metaphor of cultural relations between First and Third World nations” (Johnson, 1987, p. 42). Viewed as a radical form of cultural negotiation when it was proposed, the *Manifesto* remains an important text in Brazilian academic theoretical critique. As such, it upholds culture’s hybrid character in the Latin American in-between space.

History demonstrates how hybridity preserved native identity in the colonial process. Thea-

tre and spectacle were instrumental for the colonization of Latin America and the implementation of a new structure of power. Missionary theatre, especially *autos* of a medieval character, brought the Catholic faith to the soil of Brazil and other colonies. But even in the amateur performances promoted by the Jesuits for purposes of catechism, there were traces of cultural hybridity. Indigenous languages were used in the performances, alongside Portuguese and Spanish, in order to attract the natives, who comprised the target audience of the *Companhia de Jesus*. A letter written in 1585 by the Jesuit Fernão Cardim to the authorities in Portugal documents the impressive “degree of interpenetration” he observed between art and religion, as well as between European and indigenous cultures, in the performances promoted by the missionaries.¹ To this effect, Diana Taylor, in her discussion of the “mixing and overlapping of belief systems” during the Conquest, highlights that “indigenous performances, paradoxically, seem to be transferred and reproduced within the very symbolic system designed to eliminate them [...]” (Taylor, 2007, p. 44). The natives of the Americas knew how to devise their own schemes of resistance to colonization.

Cultural interpenetration and hybridity have characterized the translation, reception and production of Shakespeare in Brazil since the last decades of the twentieth century. The presence of the English poet in the country, conveyed in translations, productions and criticism, can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. It is interesting to observe that although the initial reception to Shakespeare’s work carried the marks of colonization, it was the influence of France that mediated his arrival in the former Portuguese colony, attesting to the power of French culture in Latin America at that time. João Caetano (1808-1863), the first Brazilian actor to play Hamlet, Othello and other Shakespearean roles, relied on indirect translations for his success, i.e., Portuguese versions of the notorious adaptations crafted by Jean-François Ducis. These conformed to the Aristotelian unities and other neoclassical norms prescribed by the *Comédie française*. In Brazil, Portuguese versions of Ducis’s texts marked the arrival of a Shakespeare enmeshed in competing layers of cultural dominance and colonization. It was only in the twentieth century that the plays were rendered into Brazilian Portuguese directly from English source texts. Initial ventures in this direction include Tristão da Cunha’s prose translation of *Hamlet* in 1933, and the verse translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, by Onestaldo de Pennafort in 1937.

Throughout the twentieth century, Brazilian response to the works of Shakespeare gradually intensified and acquired distinctive national features. In the 1980s and 1990s, *Romeo and Juliet* was translated and produced in three very diverse contexts in Brazil, bringing to the fore issues such as cultural memory, cosmopolitanism and hybridity. While José Alves Antunes Filho, in the urban center of São Paulo, articulated the cosmos of the play with Roland Barthes’s *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* and the music of the Beatles, Grupo Galpão, one of Brazil’s best-known companies, explored the local traditions of the state of Minas Gerais in its version of Shakespeare’s play. The third rendition of the story of the tragic lovers occurred in the Brazilian Northeast, where oral tradition and literate forms were fused to create yet another vision of *Romeo and Juliet*. The distinct approaches for the translation of the play will be addressed below, focusing on different levels of intervention

¹ For a discussion of Jesuit theatre in Brazil, please see Décio de Almeida Prado, *Teatro de Anchieta a Alencar*.

and following the chronological order in which they were produced.

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE

Antunes Filho's stage production of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1984 played an important role in renegotiating the function of Shakespeare in Brazil, displacing his legacy from the realm of the elite. It took place in the twilight years of the dictatorship period and in order to contextualize its subversive character, it is important to remember that Shakespeare's 400th anniversary of birth, in 1964, coincided with the military coup in Brazil. The military leaders thoroughly supported the celebrations, as they considered Shakespeare's dramaturgy safe ground and unrelated to politics (Camati and Galery, 2024).

Twenty years later, the story of Shakespeare's tragic lovers was chosen to comprise a repertory project Antunes Filho was developing in São Paulo for the Centre for Theatre Research, run by the Social Service of Commerce (SESC), a private entity devoted to the promotion of social and educational projects. *Romeo and Juliet* may not be the most obvious play to be staged with a political intent, but Antunes Filho highlighted what he viewed as the text's "subversive undercurrents". According to the late director, the work portrays "the infinitely repeated history of humanity's frustration", thus presenting a vigorous political stance regarding the conflicts between personal desire and the social order (Production Program, 1985). This vision is shared by François Laroque, who indicates specific traits of subversion within the play itself: its "enduring fascination for world audiences" results from Shakespeare's exploration of "the frictions between high and low spheres, public and private lives, age and youth, authority and rebellion, sacred and secular love" (Laroque, 1995, p. 18-19). Furthermore, the tragic outcome of the play points to a radical questioning of patriarchy and its dictates on love and marriage. In the political context of Brazil in the mid-1980s, characterized by the transition from military rule to democracy, Antunes Filho's rendition of *Romeo and Juliet* enacted a subtle protest against the old, conservative and established order.

This came forth in a production which privileged the energy of youth, the urgency of love, and the intensity of desire. Additionally, the production's theoretical framework relied on Roland Barthes's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, wherein Barthes identifies the lover's discourse as an anachronistic and isolated practice. According to the French author, the lover is vulnerable and isolated from the realm of productivity, competition and other relations of power. Being outdated and erratic, the lover's utterances oppose the articulate, assertive voices of Certainty, Arrogance and Triumph. Antunes Filho wanted to evoke nostalgia for this disorderly discourse, and the rebellious spirit of the youth culture of the sixties and early seventies. For this, he used various songs by the Beatles in the production. As the program notes state, "both Shakespeare and the Beatles began with a genre of youth – the impassioned poetry of love and sex – and leapt effortlessly into the full human comedy, as understood in their respective eras" (Milton Okun, Production Program, 1985). According to a reviewer of the production, the use of music was a key element in the emotional

involvement achieved between public and performers (Goés, 1984, p. 43).²

The text used for the production was a shortened prose translation by Antunes Filho, who shunned published translations of the play into Portuguese, such as Onestaldo de Pennafort's verse translation. Published in 1940, Pennafort's translation has many characteristics of a scholarly endeavor, with nearly eighty pages of annotations and explicative comments. Pennafort emphasized in the introduction that, although the translation could serve "purely literary objectives", his primary focus was the stage (Pennafort, 1968, p. 1). Antônio Candido, one of Brazil's most renowned literary critics, praised Pennafort's text for its easy and natural dialogue, which even maintained the bawdy images, for "nothing would sadden more the popular Shakespeare than thinking that his work had been transformed into an erudite project inaccessible to the audience." In a similar manner, Mário de Andrade, an important Modernist, avowed his appreciation of the translation, recognizing in Pennafort one of the most reliable translators of poetry at the time. Andrade also affirmed that the translation deserved a place in the mainstream of Brazilian literature, thus blurring the division between a translation and an original work.³

But Antunes, in translating *Romeo and Juliet*, used an idiom that the audiences, particularly young people, could understand and identify as their own. Unlike Pennafort, he translated the play in prose, with the exceptions of the prologue and epilogue. For instance, Juliet's lines in Shakespeare's play:

Conceit, more rich in matter than in words,
Brag of his substance, not of ornament.
They are but beggars that can count their worth;
But my true love is grown to such excess
I cannot sum up of half my wealth. (2.6.30-4)

are rendered by Pennafort in rhyming couplets and are two lines longer than the English text:

O sentimento quanto mais profundo
Mais nobre é na aparência e mais rico no fundo.
Não de ornamentos vãos e frívola aparência
Se orgulha, mas da sua própria essência.
Poder contar seu ouro, é sinal de pobreza.
E o meu amor chegou a tal riqueza,
Que nem pela metade o contarei agora! (Shakespeare, 1968, p. 113)

Pennafort works with Shakespeare's elaborate metaphor regarding the difficulty of measur-

² For a discussion of the relations between Shakespeare and the Beatles, please see *Shakespeare e os Beatles: o caminho do gênio*, by José Roberto de Castro Neves.

³ The comments by Antônio Cândido and Mário de Andrade appear on the book jacket of Pennafort's translation of Shakespeare's play. The translation of Candido's words is my own.

ing the feeling of love. But Antunes Filho reduces the passage to a mere “*Meu amor é tão grande, mas tão grande ... Que nem sei onde vai!*” [My love is so great, but so great... I don’t even know where how far it goes!], which actually sounds much closer to an adolescent’s utterance (Antunes Filho, *Romeu e Julieta*, 1985). Pennafort’s verses and language would seem dissonant to the spirit of Antunes Filho’s production, which targeted a young audience and rejected the authority of the written word. Furthermore, the use of music from the Beatles suggested the rebellious culture of the late 1960s rather than the authority of the canon. In this manner, the play resonated with the urgent aspirations of the local audience: young Brazilians nostalgic for a world entirely different from the crumbling undemocratic government still in power in Brazil.

Antunes Filho did not bring into the production specific Brazilian cultural traits, but instead adopted a cosmopolitan approach to the play in its inclusion of the Beatles’ music, a signifier of English culture. An international phenomenon strongly associated to counterculture’s youth movement of the 1960s, the songs recall the era’s antiauthoritarianism, when the young challenged the ideology of their parents’ generation, crying out for greater personal freedom and social transformation in a radical utopian manner. As Jessica Corry points out, “through their music, the Beatles distilled the mood of their time, epitomized the tension between generations, ‘the loneliness of the dislocated sixties [as well as] the bitter sweet of young love in any age’” (Corry, 2010, p. 3). In this fashion, the use of music was appropriate to convey the anguish of Shakespeare’s young lovers in the patriarchal world of the play. Antunes Filho was audacious in his translation and stage rendition of Shakespeare’s play, disregarding hierarchy and merging signifiers of high culture and counterculture. In its use of language and music, the production conveyed a very specific response to Shakespeare at that moment of Brazilian history and politics. Attentive to local purposes, it was disruptive of canonic authority, incorporating elements focused on the emotional involvement of the audience. According to Sábato Magaldi, the performance had “magic”, and the public was “able to identify the evils that everywhere thwart human freedom to love and exist” (qtd. in George, 1992, p. 116). They recognized, in what they saw on stage, something akin to their experience.

LOCAL COLOR

Differently from Antunes Filho’s production, the most internationally acclaimed Brazilian rendition of Shakespeare is abundant in traits of regional culture, marking a decisive role in adapting and performing Shakespeare for popular audiences. In 1992, Grupo Galpão, a company dedicated to street theatre, presented a version of *Romeo and Juliet* that was totally immersed in the folklore of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais. Galpão’s *Romeu e Julieta* performed at various international venues, and played twice at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London, first in 2000 and later, as part of the Cultural Olympiad, in 2012.

Under the direction of Gabriel Villela, the production was originally conceived as an open-air performance, but it has also been presented inside theatres. Relying on elements derived both

from popular and erudite culture, Villela's *mise en scène* evoked the image of clowns from a decadent circus troupe trying to perform a tragedy of love. To achieve this effect, the production adopted a deliberately declamatory and embellished acting style, thus paying tribute to the *mambembe*, amateur companies found in the interior of Brazil. W. B. Worthen described the performance he attended at the Globe as "a brilliant comic tour de force", drawing attention to the actors' elaborate costumes as "an elegant wardrobe of finery and motley" (Worthen, 2003, p. 157).

The production also wanted to celebrate the memory of medieval strolling players who transformed their wagons into makeshift stages for performances in fairs and parades. To this effect, the main scenic element was an old station wagon. Interestingly, the Brazilian name for the vehicle model, Veraneio, works as a pun on Verona. Although an automobile might initially appear dissonant and intrusive, bearing no immediate relation with the play, the actors made creative use of the resources offered by the car. Two balance beams were placed above the vehicle for the lovers to walk on, insinuating the balancing act of tightrope walkers, a stunt which acquired the metaphoric connotation of love's uncertainty and risk. Villela argued that

Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy of love, freedom and death, conducted by the speed proper of the lovers' youth. This condition suggested the adoption of circus techniques. Through these, we constructed the dangerous, impulsive quality of this tragedy, and we scenically elaborated the ambivalence of anguish and pleasure, of amorous energy, aggression and passion concentrated in the force of Shakespeare's text (Villela, Production Program, 1992).

The dramatic text used departed from Onestaldo de Pennafort's translation, but Antônio Carlos Brandão, the dramaturg, not only made various cuts to it, but also established a dialogue between Pennafort's translation of *Romeo and Juliet* and one of Brazil's most important and original novels, *Grande sertão: veredas*, the *magnum opus* of João Guimarães Rosa. The language of Guimarães Rosa's novel is celebrated for its poetic reworking of the speech of the backlands of Minas Gerais, the *sertão*, exploring sonority and archaisms, thus provoking a trance-like state, where the reader is absorbed by the logic of a new linguistic universe. But Rosa's text moves beyond the regional context, for the author borrowed words from other languages, adapting them into neologisms derived from many sources.

Brandão used Pennafort's translation as a starting point for his version. But he reduced the length of the earlier Brazilian translation and inserted references to Rosa's epic novel, while creating his own neologisms. Brandão's use of Portuguese terms such as *tremeluz*, *remôo*, or *gã*, among others in the final text used by the company, is an intertextual reference to Rosa's work. Likewise, phrases such as "*a noite produziu, depois engoliu*" ["the evening produced, and then swallowed"], in Brandão's version, echo Rosa's "*o sertão me produziu, depois me engoliu*" ["the *sertão* produced me, and then swallowed me"]. Another example is "*redemoinho desta praça*" ["the whirlwind in this square"], delivered by Galpão's narrator, which Brazilian speakers might relate to "*o diabo na rua, no meio do redemoinho*" ["the devil in the street, in the midst of the whirlwind"], spoken by Riobaldo, the cen-

tral character in Rosa's *Sertão*.⁴ In this manner, the final text used in the production suggested the transcendental regionalism that characterizes Rosa's literary portrayal of the backlands in Minas Gerais. Furthermore, the incisions to Pennafort's text were supplemented with folkloric music, including traditional children's ballads and *serestas*, romantic songs used in courting serenades.

Barbara Heliodora, an important Brazilian Shakespearean specialist and translator, wrote a review of Galpão's play for the Rio de Janeiro daily paper *O Globo*, where she astutely conveyed an impression of the concept behind Galpão's production. As she saw it, it was as if *Romeo and Juliet* were being performed by the rustic 'mechanicals' of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She wrote that, with his "competence and talent," Villela was capable of making Grupo Galpão "suggest exactly what Shakespeare hoped [the 'mechanicals'] would portray with the tragicomedy of 'Pyramus and Thisby': [. . .] the image of an inexperienced and not very talented group, struggling heroically to give their best" (Heliodora, 1993). Here, Galpão's talent is not called into question: the aptness of the comparison lies in the identification of the homage the troupe pays to the most marginal performers in Brazil, the *mambembes*, in a demonstration of love for what Peter Brook calls "the rough theatre," in its rudimentary, yet immediate art.

It is possible to conceive the amalgamation of Shakespeare's play with the cultural imaginary of Minas Gerais as the result of an anthropophagic process where the foreign text is absorbed and transformed in an interplay between margin and center, local and universal. The image of the marginal players performing a canonic author by means of their own resources and traditions works metaphorically as a strategy for the translation of the canon by non-hegemonic cultures. But when Galpão's *Romeu e Julieta* is performed at a venue such as Shakespeare's Globe Theater in London, during the Cultural Olympiad, the dynamics between center and periphery are thrown off course: the site representing the "original" text receives and celebrates its transformation.

DISPLACING AUTHORSHIP

Another version of *Romeo and Juliet* that amalgamates Shakespeare to a Brazilian regional context is Ariano Suassuna's 1996 play, *A história de amor de Romeu e Julieta* [*The Love Story of Romeo and Juliet*]. The subtitle to this version, "Imitação brasileira de Matteo Bandello" ["A Brazilian Imitation of Matteo Bandello"] is a reference to the Italian writer who may have provided Shakespeare with the basics for the plot. But the main focus for Suassuna's version is the tradition of *literatura de cordel*, the chapbook ballads produced in the arid Northeast of Brazil, where Suassuna is an important playwright and cultural reference. Originally imported from the Iberian Peninsula, the long narrative poems make up a unique expression of popular culture that is prolific in this region of Brazil. The name *cordel* (thin rope or string) refers to the practice of hanging booklets from a string for display in open-air fairs and markets. These ballads persist in the Northeast, where they follow

⁴ For a discussion of Brandão's references to the work of Guimarães Rosa, please see Aline Miriane Guerios, *A atualidade de Shakespeare: um estudo sobre Romeu e Julieta do Grupo Galpão*.

a rhyming six-line stanza verse pattern, characteristic of improvised poetry. Verse facilitates memorization so that the stories can be learned and passed on orally: in the backlands, where other sources of entertainment were scarce, the *cordel* ballads were a popular literary genre (Slater, 1983, p. 36). With the increase of the population in the region during the nineteenth century, the circulation of the chapbooks intensified; they were cheaply produced in small printshops and sold in marketplaces and rotating fairs.

Poets usually paid local publishers to print their tales; in these situations, the *cordel* booklet might carry the name of the owner of the printshop rather than that of poet. The enormous range of topics dealt with in the chapbooks includes religious stories, chivalric tales (such as those of Charlemagne's military campaigns), stories of the *cangaceiros* (Northeastern bandits), struggles of the poor, current news events, and adaptations of a variety of literary works, portrayed through the filter of the local imagination. The great boom of chapbook production took place in the 1940s and 1950s. Since then, these numbers have decreased, mainly due to the expansion of urban, industrialized society, and the arrival of other media in the region, offering other sources of entertainment and information to the population.

Authorship is a complex matter in the process of chapbook production and it is uncertain whether João Martins de Athayde, poet and owner of a press, wrote *Romance de Romeu e Julieta*, the leaflet ballad Suassuna adapted for the stage. In the *cordel* version, the list of characters is reduced to six and the plot submits to the local code of honor. Thus, a moral division is created between the two households, polarizing the two families. Feuds between families are common in Northeastern Brazil, and often extend back several generations. It may have been this element that turned the story relevant for local audiences. But the author of the *cordel* also takes sides: rather than telling the story of "two households, both alike in dignity," he establishes that the Montequio are an honest and virtuous clan, while the Capuleto are described as members of a "race of tyrants" (Slater, 1983, p. 42).

But other liberties are taken with the text, such as an incident entirely invented by the *cordel* poet: the ballad begins with the kidnapping of Count Montequio, his wife and Romeu, who is at the time but an infant of two years of age. The three are confined to a cold cell, where Capuleto terrorizes his antagonist by murdering the Countess before the eyes of her husband and child, driving a dagger into her heart with enough brutality to break her rosary. To further raise the indignation of his public, the *cordel* poet has Capuleto deny a proper burial to Romeu's mother; instead, he orders his men to drag her body through the town before it is finally thrown into the ocean. The murder of Romeu's mother constitutes the climax of the *cordel* version: nearly a third of the ballad is devoted to its description. Furthermore, the incident sets the stage for the development of the story as a tale of failed revenge: when Romeu reaches the age of eighteen, he swears he will murder Capuleto. But when he arrives at his enemy's house, there is a party in celebration of Julieta's birthday. Romeu falls in love with her and decides to betray his promise of revenge. The remains of the story follow the basic lines of Shakespeare's play: a secret marriage between the young lovers, Julieta's taking of a poison to make her sleep while seeming to have died and the tragic outcome, with the death of the couple.

As mentioned above, Suassuna preferred to acknowledge Matteo Bandello rather than Shakespeare as the source for his adaptation of the *cordel* version of *Romeu e Julieta* for the stage. Although he maintained the language and plot structure very close to those of the chapbook version, the final play ended up making an allusion to Shakespeare's *theatrical* tradition. Suassuna introduced two narrators and re-worked the language of the *cordel* text, smoothing out the awkwardness of some expressions. He also used some explicit localization strategies, stating in the stage directions that Verona corresponds to the city of Recife, capital of the Northeast state of Pernambuco, and Mantua corresponds to Olinda, a historical colonial town in the same state. The stage directions also call for smaller stage within the set of the play. On this smaller stage there are puppets who act out for the adult Romeo the atrocity of his mother's murder. The inner stage is likewise used during the declamation of the verses that describe the young couple's wedding night. Outside, on the outer stage, there are chairs where the two narrators, who remain present throughout the play, sit down and listen.

These different levels of theatricality described in the stage directions underscore a fascination with theatrical representation akin to that of Shakespeare's *theatrum mundi*. Suassuna relies on the use of a play-within-the-play for the elucidation of the murder that must be avenged. The analogy between this use of metatheatre to the Mousetrap scene in *Hamlet* is clear. Suassuna's *Romeu e Julieta* thus takes the form of a revenge play that is transformed into a tragedy of love. Romeu, like Hamlet, is asked to execute an act that will avenge the murder of his own blood. Unlike Hamlet, however, Romeu is convinced that the deed must be done; he only changes his mind when he falls in love with the daughter of his enemy.

Suassuna thus establishes an identity between his play and the very tradition he denies, that of Shakespearean drama. Clearly, the Brazilian author's empowering of popular culture is a form of resistance against sociopolitical and cultural domination. But there is another aspect of the writer's treatment of the *cordel* ballad that signals a contradictory approach to popular culture: the subtitle of the play, "Brazilian Imitation of Matteo Bandello". In his concern for the preservation of specific regional culture, safeguarding it from the weight of the Shakespearean canon, it seems Suassuna wishes to tap the source directly, bypassing the English poet. But given the difficulty to establish authorship in the *cordel* booklets and its ties to the oral tradition, an erudite source such as Bandello is unnecessary: Shakespeare is the much more popular author.

DECOLONIZING THE CANON

"Finery and motley": these were the terms used by W. B. Worthen to describe the costumes worn by the Grupo Galpão players performing Shakespeare. It is also an apt description of the various elements incorporated in the hybrid renditions discussed in this essay. The three Brazilian translations and productions of *Romeo and Juliet* examined here are the result of very specific moments and contexts, foregrounding translation as a supplement, rather than a derivative practice.

These appropriations of Shakespeare in three very different contexts liberate the text from cultural fixity and displace the authority of the canon. They are emblematic of a moment when Shakespeare began to be more widely staged in Brazil, in the last decades of the twentieth century. They also point to a complex negotiation between different traditions, bringing them into contact, and producing unexpected encounters.

Antunes Filho asserts the freedom of the Latin American cultural producer in dealing with the canon, bringing together different layers of culture. His creative vision of Shakespeare's play, evoking the rebellious spirit of the nineteen sixties and seventies, contrasts the authoritarian postures of the dictatorship still in power. Grupo Galpão's version, on the other hand, comes forth as a further exercise of decolonization, bringing the source closer to the target culture by immersing *Romeo and Juliet* in the culture of Minas Gerais. Galpão's translation of the play also brings the language of Shakespeare into contact with that of Guimarães Rosa, a Brazilian literary giant, thus emphasizing a non-derivative approach in the handling of the canonic text. Ariano Suassuna's version is similarly multi-layered, relying on the booklet, a cultural product with close ties to the oral tradition. Rather than Shakespeare, he acknowledges Matteo Bandello. But Suassuna's play is a re-writing of the *cordel* ballad, a popular literary form which blurs the figure of the author.

The Shakespearean text is residual in the three Brazilian versions of *Romeo and Juliet* discussed here. These translations, reinterpretations and appropriations of the play disrupt the hegemony of the canon, responding to it with energy and creativity. They configure the anthropophagous ritual within Latin American discourse, described by Silviano Santiago as the space in between "sacrifice and playfulness, prison and transgression, obedience and rebellion, submission to the code and aggression, assimilation and expression" (Santiago, 2001, p. 38).

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