

## A POSTCOLONIAL *TEMPEST* IN FLORIANOPOLIS

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This article seeks to give an account of some of the work that took place during an academic link between the University of Exeter and Santa Catarina State University (UDESC) in Florianopolis, Brazil in 1999 and 2000. The link was jointly funded by the British Council and the Brazilian CAPES and was intended for pairs of academics to visit each other's institutions, share their work and experience the contrasting academic and social cultures. On my second visit to Brazil in November – December 2000 I worked with Dr André Carreira to co-direct a production of *The Tempest* at UDESC; work that attempted to develop and stage a postcolonial reading of the play in a location that is the site of colonial expropriation.

### **The site.**

Florianopolis is the state capital of Santa Catarina, 700 kilometres south of São Paulo, a city of 350,000 built partly on a beautiful island a few hundred metres from the mainland. It has a distant similarity to Exeter (though three times the size), having the State administration offices, two universities – the large Federal University (UFSC) and the smaller UDESC – and an economy based more on tourism and service industry than manufacturing or agriculture. The city is also well known as a holiday destination, with more than 40 beaches, a developed holiday culture and low levels of air pollution and crime. Much of this is also true of Exeter and the county of Devon. A Professor I met at UFSC, who had relocated to Florianopolis for its quality of life (a familiar story in Devon, too) told me that the city is 'just as beautiful as Rio, but a hundred times safer.'

The island of Santa Catarina was named by Cabot in 1500, but was known to subsequent Azorean settlers as the *Ilha do Desterro* (Island of Exile) and at some point in the history of its colonisation it was also known locally as the island of *Majia* (magic). The early Azorean colonisers came in the seventeenth century, a process that for many constituted a second exile. This was because many Azoreans had been expelled from Portugal for the practice of witchcraft; and when the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil began, they were induced to make the journey by the promise of gold and cattle on their arrival. These promises were all broken and, unable to return, Azoreans began to establish farming and fishing communities on a beautiful, temperate island and its hinterland. The naming of the island of *Majia* was part of the colonists' narrative. Poor and often twice exiled from Portugal, Azoreans took with them remnants of Catholicism and witchcraft and then encountered, among the small native population, the use of plants and charms. They firstly appropriated native customs and then, as the indigenous population succumbed to disease and violence, expropriated their land; a complex process of oppression described by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972:23).

In Florianopolis, as in other parts of Brazil, cultural diversity became more marked with the absorption of elements of African culture through slavery, even though the Afro-Brazilian population in Santa Catarina is small, in comparison, for instance, with the north eastern States. Later, as economic activity accelerated, Portuguese and Azorean colonisation in the south east was overtaken by subsequent large-scale immigration from the USA and European countries other than Portugal, in particular Italy and Germany. One only has to look down the surnames on the cast-list of our production at the end of this article to see a result of this. It is also apt to note that this immigration developed as a matter of a policy to 'whiten' Brazil. The

census of 1872 gives a white population of 3.78 million, a mixed-race population of 4.2 million and a black population of 2 million; whereas a census in 1890 shows that the white population had risen to 6.3 million, the mixed race to 5.9 and the black still at 2 million. (Skidmore 1999:78) Neither census attempted to include any figures for Brazil's native population.

For me the sense of the island's history was sharpened by the presence, in beautiful, 'safe' Florianopolis as in many Brazilian cities, of a large *favela* just across the bridge joining the island to the mainland, where tens of thousands subsist in shacks built illegally on State land. The majority of these people are of mixed race (native Brazilian-African-European), whereas the majority of bureaucrats, academics (and many of their students), office workers, shop and restaurant owners, is of Mediterranean descent. It's also striking that the large percentage of the population who are poorer and of mixed race form a stratum in the hierarchy that serves the 'European' population by, for instance, servicing and guarding their apartments, cleaning and mending the streets and labouring on building sites.

### **Text and appropriation.**

André's professional and academic engagement is in physical performance and theatre making for non-theatrical spaces. Mine is in playwriting, dramaturgy and theatre making. During my first visit to UDESC, we worked together on a textual interpretation course in which students were given scenes from Shakespeare's plays to work on. This might be a considerable requirement, one might think, for Brazilians living at the beginning of the twenty-first century. But given that André wants his students to understand the hegemonic influences of European theatre in colonised cultures, it was clear that to study Shakespeare (before Lope de Vega, Caldéron de la

Barca or Molière, for example) as canonical in European and colonial theatre was appropriate. André had already directed adaptations of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, the first of which I was able to see on video and the second in a performance by André's student company during our work on *The Tempest*. I had also seen the Brazilian Grupo Galpao's street-theatre production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Globe in London and André's own 50-minute highly physical adaptation of it for five actors. The Shakespeare workshops at UDESC led us to discuss the possibilities of an extension of the link specifically to exchange our theatre work, with André coming to Exeter to develop a workshop performance of a text by the Brazilian playwright Nelson Rodrigues (*O Beijo No Asfalto - The Kiss in the Gutter*) and me returning to Brazil to co-direct a Shakespeare play. Exeter students had been excited by working in a physical way on a Brazilian text with a Latin American director and UDESC students were keen to develop new performance skills using Shakespearean text. So our starting-point was full of possibilities: a meeting of two different theatrical traditions and cultures that would favour neither but attempt to interrogate a Shakespeare text for a postcolonial context. The question was: which text?

Discussions in Exeter, while André was working on *O Beijo No Asfalto*, revealed that we had both wanted to direct *The Tempest*. Since we were going to use André's Textual Interpretation II course for the project, in a university built on a colonised island (of *majia* and also *desterro*); and since we wanted a text that would provide possibilities for a postcolonial reading, we agreed that that text should be *The Tempest*. We also agreed that André would decide which Portuguese translation to use and he subsequently selected Barbara Heliodora's (1999). But before that, while we were working together in Exeter, we discussed at some length a possible starting-point for our reading of the play and also a possible starting-point for its scenography.

We wanted, first of all, to approach the 1623 folio text without being influenced by the large numbers of extant interpretations and appropriations; to discuss our own ideas for a postcolonial reading. In doing this we agreed that we would set aside the sort of reading that Hazlitt gave in 1817 in terms of the play's 'grace and grandeur' (1969: 238) – and readings which, in similar vein, have focussed on themes of magic and reconciliation. In our project, we wanted firstly to make a production for people who live on the *Ilha do Desterro*; and in doing it to develop a canonical counter-discourse (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996), both in our interrogation of the text and our use of performative, scenographic and metatheatrical codes.

We were aware that, during the period of our work, there were sharply contrasting productions in progress in the UK. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) staged the full text directed by James Macdonald (10: 2000) and toured it extensively. The Almeida Theatre London staged a heavily cut version directed by Jonathan Kent (12: 2000) and the Globe Theatre London staged a production directed by Lenka Udovicki (5: 2000) with Vanessa Redgrave as Prospero. Many others, of course, have staged postcolonial reworkings, notably Aimé Césaire and Jean-Marie Serreau's *Une Tempête* (Martinique 1969), Augusto Boal's *A Tempestade* (Brazil 1979), John Murrell's *New World* (Canada 1984) and David Malouf's *Blood Relations* (Australia 1987). But we weren't, like them, going to rewrite the play. Rather our intention was to base our work on the Heliodora translation and cut the text in rehearsal. In this way, our counter-discourse, our reworking of the text, would take place through performative intervention rather than out-and-out textual appropriation. The initial research question for our company was: how can a cut-down (80 minute) performance of the text express a reading in which both text and performative discourse speak *about* colonisers and at the same time *for* the colonised? This

summoned the question of how to make the spoken text and the texts of gesture, movement, music and scenography speak differently, perhaps at odds, in a discourse which would challenge a preconceived or accepted notion of the Shakespeare canon, both in terms of a reading (the meaning of the text on the page) and its staging (the meaning of the text in performance).

This began our process of canonical counter-discourse, challenging not just a 'grace and grandeur' reading but others (Romantic, for instance) in which Prospero uses his magic to bring his opponents to the island, to come to terms with his past, marry off his daughter and forgive his enemies. The starting-point of our reading was the idea of Prospero as a despot who has been overthrown by a military coup and exiled to an island with his daughter, a place he has expropriated from its native inhabitant, Caliban, using the coloniser's superior force of language and knowledge. Prospero has forced Caliban to become his slave and during the twelve years of his exile, has gradually become more despotic, decentred by his loss of political power and his isolation, obsessed by fantasies of revenge. All the other characters in our reading of the play were to be imagined by Prospero. Ariel would be his familiar spirit, 'seen' only by him, which enabled the Prospero-Ariel relationship to be developed as that of an unstable, ill-tempered master ordering about his complaining servant. We had two alternating groups of four Ariels, all female and dressed in tattered white rags that looked like unravelling bandages or bonds. At every meeting with Prospero, the distorted, angular movements of his gang of unwilling servants spoke of their bondage; and their voices, veering between whining, mockery and surly, fearful compliance, spoke of their oppression and desire to be rid of him. It helped this reading of Prospero's patriarchy and usurpation that the Ariels were

female, but I think it could have worked just as sharply had we had enough males to mix this group.

We decided early on that, with an imagined storm at the beginning, there would be no ship or sailors; but rather a storm of the psyche in which Prospero reaches a moment of crisis and summons, via the Ariels, the *images* of his enemies to the ‘theatre’ of his cell. This would mean a radical departure from the folio text, in that our reading would require Prospero, a prisoner of his own interiority, to be present and watching the progress of his revenge-fantasy all the time, since much of the action of the play would be taking place in his imagination; in fact within the ‘theatre’ of his cell. Thus arose the notion of Prospero as dictator-director and a staging of the text that employed a metatheatrical code. Our initial discussions ended with some sketches of a possible scenography for a non-theatre space: a small sand-filled arena, constructed in the public foyer of the Arts Building at UDESC, surrounded by a boarded perimeter for the audience to sit on and the whole cell-theatre enclosed by high ‘walls’ of natural-coloured drape. I will discuss the development of our performance codes later, but at the outset we had two further questions for our work: whether our reading of the play would stand up in performance; and how the students would respond to working on a 1611 English play in this way.

Some postcolonial appropriations of plays, including *The Tempest*, have approached textual reworking by relocating a text so that it has specific resonances for its intended audience. Gilbert and Tompkins (1996:26) cite productions of the play in British Columbia and Bali that attempted to develop a performative counter-discourse to fit with local history. In our work on a *Tempest* for the *Ilha do Desterro*, André and I began a discussion, which continued in the rehearsal room, about the resonances

between our initial reading of the text and the history of the island of Santa Catarina, without at any point trying to site the performance specifically in either a seventeenth-century *Ilha do Desterro/Majia* or present-day Santa Catarina. But we were moving towards a reading that invited actors as well as audience to interrogate, through performance, their idea of citizenship, whether or not they actually came from Santa Catarina. We felt that positioning Prospero as a coloniser – even initially (at the point of his exile) an unwilling one – would connect with the colonial history of the island and, more widely, Brazil. Colonisers may arrive for a variety of reasons; and in the case of Florianopolis there was the process of exile for Azoreans. But once there, the realisation of dreams of a better life became a reality of oppression as the process of transformation of the exiles into Brazilians developed. This, however, is a process that resists simple definition, since the narratives of settlers themselves often recount a resistance to the imperialist master narrative; and this includes, in the case of settler Brazilians, a revolutionary struggle to free themselves from Portuguese domination. All these narratives also exist alongside those of the indigenous oppressed, the descendents of African slaves, and so on. In a discussion with the audience after our initial showing of the work in progress on the night before I left, I was struck by the way people quickly connected what they had seen in our work with the sorts of complex narratives I have just outlined.

To make these resonances sharper as rehearsals progressed, we decided to dislocate *The Tempest* from the Mediterranean altogether, by removing references to Milan and Naples. This strengthened the idea that Prospero's exile could be in any site of colonisation; that the play could be taking place in seventeenth-century Brazil. In their introductory essay to the Arden edition of the play, Virginia and Alden Vaughan cite Shakespeare's 'almost certain familiarity with William Strachey's



*True Reportory of the Wracke, and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates* on Bermuda in July 1609'. (Vaughan and Vaughan 1999:41). This and other narratives relating to the discovery and colonisation of the Americas, including Hakluyt's *The Principall Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English Nation* of 1589 may have influenced Shakespeare's idea of Prospero's island. But as the Vaughans also point out in their *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, Shakespeare may have been influenced by Montaigne's description of Brazil and the Brazilian native population in his essay *Of the Caniballes*, which was translated into English by John Florio in 1603, adding that a British Library copy may bear Shakespeare's signature (Vaughan and Vaughan 1991: 47). It is also significant that, at least since Plato's *Timaeus*, there has existed a literature of lost lands and the possibility – the fantasy – of their rediscovery. Montaigne's description of Brazil begins with direct reference to Plato's account of Atlantis and also to Aristotle, who: 'reporteth that certaine Carthaginians, having sailed athwart the Atlantike Sea, without the strait of Gibraltar, after long time, they at last discovered a great fertill Iland, all replenished with goodly woods, and watred with great and deepe rivers, farre distant from al land'. (Morley 1886: 93). Clearly early narratives of discovery and colonial exploitation provided many accounts of voyages to exotic locations, but also an idea of recovering a lost (and perhaps better) world that was prelapsarian, pre-cataclysm. We discussed such ideas, converging on the naming of Santa Catarina as the island of *Majia*, during our process. And naming (and re-naming), of course, is part of the process of expropriation. As Freire (1972:61) says:

Human existence cannot be silent, neither can it be nourished by false words, with which men transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn appears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new *naming*. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*)

And as Caliban puts it:

You taught me language, and my profit on't  
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you  
For learning me your language

(II [ii])

As Pedro Bennaton developed his Caliban, he focused firstly on the anger of dispossession. Further on, we experimented with the idea, through discussions about (re-) naming, that Caliban should have two languages, his own and the one Prospero has forced him to learn. As we experimented with this, it led on to two further possibilities: either Caliban could somehow speak in two different voices – and possibly in two languages – or there might be two Calibans. One would be the Caliban he knew himself to be, an original native islander, now silent because his power of speech – of naming – has been removed. The other would be the ‘monster’ seen by Próspero and the others, a distorted figure who spoke in an ugly, imposed language. Unfortunately lack of rehearsal time, and lack of another male actor to play the double, meant that we had unwillingly to abandon the idea.

### **The work.**

André began rehearsals in September 2000 with workshops in physical acting technique and textual interpretation. It was agreed that he would not cast the play until immediately before I arrived on November 16, but concentrate on general character-work and physical preparation for performance. There were 19 students taking the course, 14 women and five men. This is roughly the same gender split as we have in Exeter, a situation that presents its own challenges when choosing or making texts for performance. In casting *The Tempest*, it was clear that we could not

adhere entirely to gender-specific roles even if we wanted to, since the play requires all the parts but one to be cast for men. Also the course formed an assessed part of the students' degree, which meant that we had to give everyone an opportunity to engage in work that would challenge and develop their skills in interpretation and performance. After consultation in which the students discussed the parts they would like to play, we reached our decisions and formed a cast in which (in their Portuguese versions) Próspero, Alonso, Caliban, Ferdinando and Trinculo were played by men; and the fourteen women played the two alternating groups of four Ariels, two alternating Mirandas, Stéphano, Gonzalo, Sebastiana and Antônia. In view of the way our anti-naturalistic reading of the play developed, gendering the roles in this way was an advantage.

Before I arrived in Florianopolis to begin rehearsal work, André arranged to meet me in São Paulo so we could see some performances. This was more than the act of a kind host who wanted me to see a different Brazil from provincial Florianopolis. It was also because Florianopolis, like many Brazilian cities, has no professional theatre and it would be helpful, in the context of the work we were about to undertake, if I could see a diversity of performance. What I saw in São Paulo (and elsewhere) helped me understand more concretely the context in which I was working with the students. I discuss this in a little more detail in the endnote.

We began rehearsals on November 20, by which time the play was cast, André had completed his groundwork and the company had constructed the sand-pit with its surrounding metre-wide 'catwalk' of rough wooden boards. We agreed to work on separate scenes, then come together to share what we had rehearsed/discovered. The play was performed in Portuguese and I was fortunate that several students in the company could speak English, which meant that I could have one or two English-

speaking students in my rehearsals to act as translators. This led to an exciting process, because I was also responsible for cutting the text as our work progressed; and this meant that, as I cut sections, I would transfer the cuts to the Portuguese text, helped by two or three students as well as André. In this way I became increasingly familiar with the Portuguese text, to the point where, after two weeks, I was beginning to follow the play primarily in Portuguese. Discussions in rehearsal began to develop in a free-flowing Portuguese-English exchange and the initial need to translate both the text and our discussions became less pressing. I believe this process, of rendering Shakespeare's text into our Portuguese version, marked the students' process of ownership; and it seemed to remove any sense, on their part, of trepidation at the imperialist resonances of 'the Shakespeare "industry"'. (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 19).

It was clear that the students were aware of the need to employ a wide range of performance codes and technical skills for this project, including verse speaking. I was immediately impressed by their willingness to experiment; also that, though they were aware of the work of major companies in the U.K., they didn't feel the need to ask about paradigms of performance or production from Shakespeare's home, so to speak. There were discussions about how *The Tempest* might have been performed in 1611, in the Globe or Blackfriars, but not about ways in which the Shakespeare canon is performed theatrically now. But if they hadn't seen the RSC or the Globe or the Royal National Theatre, they had experienced speculative historicisation of 'Shakespearean' England in movies like *Shakespeare in Love* and *Elizabeth*; and textual and performative appropriations in Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* and Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*. It was interesting to see that they didn't seem to want to use these mediations as performative reference for themselves, but their process

was challenging enough, perhaps, without them. And they did want to find their own way, for that context..

Early in rehearsals, we began to work on the way Próspero would populate his ‘cell’ (the real, sand-filled island-cell and his imaginary theatre) with representations of his enemies. We had to find a way for the ‘court’ – Alonso, Gonzalo, Ferdinando, Adriano, Sebastiana, Antônia – and the ‘clowns’ Trinculo and Stéphano to enter Próspero’s cell and stay there. We experimented with a device that would, we hoped, be a metatheatrical code as well as a means to give Próspero’s enemies presence. About three metres above the acting area, where a concrete balcony ran round the space, we rigged a set of eight parallel wires crossing from side to side. A simple two-metre ‘lead’ was clipped to each wire, able to run freely along it. Each of the seven imagined characters wore a harness beneath their costume that was connected with a carabiner to the ‘lead’. This enabled the characters to be left, inert and hanging from their wire, in the scenes when they were not required for Próspero’s performance of the play. It became a simple and powerful device: the ‘court’ and the ‘clowns’ were, like Próspero, constantly present, either hanging like unused marionettes, or else animated by the Ariels at Próspero’s gestured command. Although we couldn’t use the harnesses and leads in the rehearsal room, this decision informed the kind of physical work – in particular the crucial difference between a ‘catatonic’ presence and an animated one – needed by the ‘court’ and the ‘clowns’. This difference became complex: it spoke of Próspero’s increasingly despotic exercise of power, his expropriation of the island of his exile for his own purposes; and simultaneously it developed a sense, amplified by the scenography and the music, that this power was a destructive force operating on characters with no independent will.

Since we had decided to dispense with the storm as a meteorological reality and thus with a real ship and its crew, the performance began with Próspero alone in his 'cell', his eyes closed, holding a crude model ship and imagining a storm. This was realised by eerie and sombre sounds produced by three musicians on the balcony above the acting area. The four Ariels entered silently, first bringing the 'court' and the 'clowns', as though asleep, connecting them to their leads and steering them to the side, where they hung inert. The Ariels then began to perform the tempest physically and augmented the sound-text vocally. As the storm reached a climax, Miranda entered (I [ii]), snatched the ship-model from Próspero and began, in a frightened way, with:

If by your art (my dearest father) you have

Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them;

At which point the Ariels faded away, leaving Próspero to tell his daughter the story of her childhood. At no point could Miranda see the Ariels or the other characters, except, as we shall see, Caliban and Ferdinando.

Later in Act One scene two, when Próspero summons the Ariels again, Miranda does not see because her father, with a gesture, puts her to sleep. When Próspero questions the Ariels about the storm and asks if the sailors and others are safe, they answer with mocking laughter; and before Próspero summons Caliban for his first scene, he wakes Miranda. So far so good, but we could hardly play the Caliban-Trinculo-Stéphano scenes without Caliban *seeing* them. This was rationalised by agreeing that Caliban is both familiar with Próspero's 'magic' – his fantasies – but is also so desperate to find any means to repossess his island that he poignantly imagines Trinculo and Stéphano will help in his counter-coup.

Próspero has become an isolated figure, loved and feared by his daughter, obsessed by playing out his revenge-fantasy, while abusing the enslaved Caliban as

his corporeal servant. Caliban, in turn, poses a physical, sexual threat to Miranda, who fears him and has also absorbed some of her father's attitudes to him as a 'native'. The characterisation of Miranda, in particular, provided a great challenge for Tica Tezza and Mariella Murgia, who played her in alternate performances. If her father is verging on madness and she lives in terror of being raped by her father's slave, how can she maintain her own equilibrium? Or is she a child-woman, manipulated by an unscrupulous father in his fantasy of revenge against his old enemies? Can she have no sympathy for the enslaved Caliban? Does she doubt her father's sanity – or rather, how *could* she doubt it, having no other reference than the bizarre community of her exile? Or is she no more than an actor, performing at the whim of an egomaniac director? The principal idea that Tica and Mariella worked with was resistance to Próspero's inscription of his daughter as actor in his revenge-drama. Her gaze needed to be one of love and fear, perhaps as Caliban had once looked on the dispossessed settler. But she must resist his power or lose her selfhood; and this happens, as liberation for her, when her gaze finds Ferdinand and liberates him – and with him herself – from her father's control.

Here was a play that demanded the performance of interiority, but not in a naturalistic way; and speaking verse, which is hardly naturalistic either. Perhaps the tradition of robust, expressive performance in Brazil was closer to what was needed than the post-Stanislavskian (and post-Strasbergian) psychological realism that marks much western Shakespearean performance. Rather, perhaps, the way *Toda Nudez Sera Castigada!* was performed than *Prêt à Porter*. (See end note on these performances). Our student actors had to take on the challenges of creating complex presence: making meaning through verse speaking and simultaneously creating tension between the spoken and gestural texts. Some needed to approach the showing

of interiority while others' performances required a difficult contrast between being an 'absent' marionette that is animated into some form of presence by the Ariels. A Stanislavskian 'Superobjective' or 'Through Action' may have been of some use for Próspero, Miranda and Caliban, but it would hardly suffice for those characters whose reality was entirely a function of a deranged Próspero's imagination. And this contrast, between those who had at least the possibility of autonomous character and those who didn't reflected the politics of the reading.

The rehearsal room became a laboratory, in which we engaged in detailed work on the metatheatricality of Próspero's cell; on speaking the verse; on discovering how Trinculo, Stéphano and the others could move and speak non-naturalistically once they had been 'woken' by the mischievous, subversive and ever-complaining Ariels; on the difference between Próspero's imperialistic gaze and Miranda's changed gaze from love and fear of her father to sexualisation with Ferdinando. The Miranda-Ferdinando relationship required a great deal of detailed work. In any reading of the play, the 'innocent' Miranda, at the point of sexual maturity, is used by her father to effect the reconciliation of the past with the present. But if the present consists of a revenge-*fantasy* and Ferdinando is an imaginary being, there is the problem of Miranda's collusion in her father's desire to manipulate her into a political marriage with the son of his enemy. In our reading, Próspero's crisis requires his fantasy-daughter to be a player in his theatre. But the crisis is also Miranda's. Her own desire and sexual awakening enable her to 'see' Ferdinando, but differently from her father. At a crucial moment (III[i]), Miranda begins to discover Ferdinando for herself and, while her father impotently watches – a director whose actors have escaped his power – she releases him from his wire restraint and by the power of her desire, makes him real. From this moment to the end of the play, Miranda-Ferdinando become stronger,



while Próspero gradually disintegrates. The performance ends with Próspero, now impotent, firstly interrogating the ‘court’ characters with manic intensity and receiving brief answers as the Ariels prompt them. This was no reconciliation, but a madman shouting at puppets. Then, in the discovery scene (V[i]) he sweeps aside a curtain to reveal Miranda and Ferdinando, not playing chess, but making love, prior to leaving the island together. At this point Próspero collapses into the sand, the Ariels disengage his ‘creatures’ from their wires and they collapse like discarded dolls; and Caliban appears, standing over him until he crawls away. Caliban then speaks the last words in the empty arena, echoing Freire’s idea of *naming*. We still wanted to find a new ‘voice’ for this and experimented with speaking in English (which had too many other imperialist overtones!) and also saying the original name of Santa Catarina island, *Ilha do Desterro*. But in the end Pedro Bennaton felt that it was more powerful simply to repeat Caliban’s words from Act Two: ‘This island’s mine’.

Through textually cutting (but not rewriting) the play to 80 minutes in performance, through our counter-discourse, together with its performance codes, we made a piece of theatre which spoke powerfully to its audience on the *Ilha do Desterro*, as was clear from the discussion after the work-in-progress showing and, I understand, from subsequent audiences. Of course it can be said that cutting a play to almost a third of its length *is* rewriting it; that our reading changed the original so much that it made a different play. Perhaps, but this was a play for a very different culture from the one in which it was written. And however one interprets *The Tempest* (and interpret one must), André and I believe that Shakespeare’s complex vision gave us a story of power and its loss, of colonial expropriation, of a young woman’s struggle for identity. A *Tempest* for a postcolonial context must reinterpret these themes anew, and this is what we set out to do.

After I returned, André continued rehearsals and the play was given a successful run during February and March 2001. When this finished and the students had been given marks for their work on the course, there followed a process that differs radically from our practice in Exeter, yet is more common in Brazil. André wanted to add the production to the repertoire of his ‘company’, as he had done with the production of *Romeo and Juliet*. This company is an association of students and ex-students who work with him outside the UDESC curriculum, to refine and develop their work in a more intensive way than it permits. This results in performances that exist between professional and ‘student’ standard and they are taken to theatres and festivals in other cities. This seems similar to the way students take productions to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in the UK, but the difference is that many of these productions are at the core of festivals and are also seen in places where there is no other form of theatre available. This happened with *The Tempest*, which was reworked with a smaller cast, comprising those who wanted to take the work further; and it was performed in theatre festivals in other States.

It is clear, from discussions throughout and after the process, as well as e-mails I have received from the students, that they greatly enjoyed working in this challenging way; and also learned a lot about performance and postcolonial theatre in the process. This was an approach to Shakespeare in which students’ ownership of their work was, I believe, strengthened by the ways in which we, as a whole company, worked at developing a canonical counter-discourse. As part of this, the appropriation of the play developed clear postcolonial resonances, both about the *Ilha do Desterro* and Brazil, and students talked about this, and about themselves in relation to Brazil’s colonial history.

### **A note on Brazilian performance.**

My experience is slender, but during my two visits I saw a variety of work, both professional and amateur/semi-professional. As Fernando Peixoto, discussing Brazilian theatre and national identity, summarises the situation:

The two most important production centers for professional theatre are São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro – centers of industrial and economic development. A semiprofessional theatre exists in five or six other states, but it is plagued by poor business and irregular activity. It is very difficult to have a comprehensive view of such a diffuse reality. (Peixoto 1990:61)

In Salvador in the north east I encountered street drumming bands and a performance of Afro-Brazilian music that fused Latin American samba, jazz and African percussion and song. In São Paulo with André I saw the extraordinary *Apocalypse 1,11* set and performed in a prison (and partly informed by a São Paulo prison riot in 1993 in which 111 prisoners were shot), Nelson Rodrigues' *Toda Nudez Sera Castigada (All Nudity Will Be Punished)* performed in a studio theatre, a free musical play for teenagers about the internet by Aimar Labaki performed in a city centre theatre; and three pieces directed by Antunes Filho called *Prêt-à-Porter* performed in the foyer of his CPT-SESC performer training centre.

I met Antunes Filho at CPT-SESC, where students go to be taught by him for two years. *Prêt-à-Porter* was a project showing, three one-act plays developed through improvisation using a process of psychological realism derived, as he explained, from Stanislavski and the development of the early system by Strasberg. Filho's reputation in Brazilian theatre rests on his innovative work over forty years,

during which he has done much to introduce new techniques of acting and performance in Brazil including, in this case, highly detailed small-scale naturalistic performance. The significance of this is outlined in Peixoto's discussion when, summarising the situation in the late 1980s, only five years after the end of 20 years of military dictatorship, he writes, 'There is one director, Antunes Filho and his group Macunaíma, whose work continues to reflect renewed creativity and who portrays the assimilated nationalism of minimalist theatre'. (1990: 68) But, as he also notes in the same section, 'economic limitations paralyse the best directors and limit the scope of our best playwrights'.

The economic limitations are still present, partly through lack of subsidy for the arts and lack of audience for live theatre. As Peixoto also points out, the ubiquitous TV *novellas* (soap operas) command audiences of millions who sit at home and indulge in escapism; but the fact is also that many towns have no theatre activity. This is true of Florianópolis, a state capital, which has a municipal arts centre but no theatre company, so the only public performances are occasional tours and concerts. This means that semi-professional performances, including work by groups like André's, are a significant form of cultural production.

We went straight from *Prêt-à-Porter* to see the production of *Toda Nudez Sera Castigada*, which was delivered with great intensity in a style that seemed to owe more to expressionism than naturalism. The next night we were in a disused prison for *Apocalypse 1,11*, a written-devised performance that attempted to engage with the politics of contemporary Brazilian culture by employing violently transgressive tropes of Catholic theology and also theatrical performance, through various uses of the explicit body. The last piece was the free music-theatre show for teenagers and was

about the Internet, using lots of music and caricature. In that weekend I saw something of the variety of performance taking place in very different spaces.

#### THE CAST

Próspero: Luis Cudo  
Miranda: Mariella Murgia/ Tica Tezza  
Ariel: Maria da Graça Albino  
Loren Fischer  
Giselly Hess  
Milena Moraes  
Kelly de Moraes  
Mariene Petrobelli  
Luana Raiter  
Renata Vavolizza  
Caliban: Pedro Bennaton  
Ferdinando: Luis Eduardo Beltrão  
Stéfano: Anamaria Vincenzi  
Trínculo: Christiano Scheiner  
Antônia: Débora Matos  
Sebastiana: Flavia Janiaski  
Alonso: Francisco Capparelli  
Gonzalo: Katia Reinisch

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