Back to the roots: Shakespeare and Popular Culture in the 20th and 21st centuries

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Back to the roots
Shakespeare and Popular Culture in the 20th and 21st centuries

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents........................................................................................................3

INTRODUCTION...........................................................................................................6

CHAPTER 1 - Shakespeare and popular culture.............................................11

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1.</td>
<td>Shakespeare and Popular Culture Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.</td>
<td>Defining ‘culture’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.</td>
<td>Defining ‘the popular’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.</td>
<td>Theories in the 20th century: Mass culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5.</td>
<td>Theories in the postmodernist period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.</td>
<td>Shakespeare as ‘high’ culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7.</td>
<td>Shakespeare and popular theatre.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 2 - Shakespeare festivals.................................................................30

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1.</td>
<td>Theatre and festivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.</td>
<td>The genesis of Shakespeare festivals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.</td>
<td>Shakespeare festivals around the (English speaking) world today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.</td>
<td>Shakespeare Festivals and their features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1.</td>
<td>Summer holidays and Festivals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2.</td>
<td>Outdoor performances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3.</td>
<td>Festivals and comedies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4.</td>
<td>Shakespeare, education and festivals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.</td>
<td>An idyllic fraternization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 3 - Romeu e Julieta: A case study....................................................52

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1.</td>
<td>Cultural identity in Brazil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.</td>
<td>Shakespeare in Brazil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.</td>
<td>Grupo Galpão.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.</td>
<td>Grupo Galpão’s Romeu e Julieta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1.</td>
<td>Creating Romeu e Julieta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2.</td>
<td>The texts – A dialogue between Shakespeare, Pennaforte and Rosa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3.</td>
<td>The scenic choices: Circus, precipitation, street theatre and the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4.</td>
<td>Shakespeare para inglês ver, or, Shakespeare as you like it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION............................................................................................................82

LIST OF WORKS CITED..........................................................................................88

Books and Articles:.................................................................................................
In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word ‘identity’ is defined as “the quality of being the same” and as “the sameness of a person or a thing at all times or in all circumstances” (1.a. 2.a.)\(^1\). In a clash with these definitions, Stuart Hall, one of the founding names of Cultural Studies\(^2\), described identity as being multiple, historically defined and subject to constant transformations, depending on how it is represented in different contexts (223-37). This shifting and multifaceted quality is true for individuals, groups and societies, as well as for the image of an author and his or her works, assuming different identities at different times.

One of the best examples of this fluctuating feature of identity is the English playwright William Shakespeare (1564-1616). His name and image have become a sign that encompasses a variety of qualities, a tool for reshaping other cultural objects, becoming a brand most commonly recognizable as sophisticated, important, erudite, complex, artistic, universal, intellectual, a natural genius, etc. But these qualities are part of only one side of his identity. One of the forces that have produced other facets of Shakespeare in our time is popular culture. In its search for identity, culture in general can carry out at least two functions: one of sacralisation, unifying a community around its myths, its beliefs and its memory, or the opposite, i.e a function of desacralization, dismantling a given system or standard, stripping hidden mechanisms, demystifying an element. Positioned against academic and high cultural assumptions that they possess the ‘authentic’ Shakespeare, contemporary popular culture communicates with audiences searching for other meanings and values.

Shakespeare has become a site of contestation, instead of a simple repository of cultural wisdom; or as Dennis Kennedy once affirmed: “Shakespeare is now a machine to make theatre, to reveal other cultures, to observe their constant change” (quoted in Galery 42). Today we can wonder if Shakespeare’s force really lies in the idea that he is the “universally relevant inventor of the human”\(^3\)” (Linnermann 8), or

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\(^1\) All my references to the *OED* will be taken from the lastest online version.

\(^2\) School of thought founded by Hall, Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, in Birmingham, in 1964. Scholars in this line focus on interdisciplinary investigations of cultural phenomena in different groups or societies. For a detailed discussion on British Cultural Studies, see John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (1994) pp.vii-xi.

\(^3\) Certainly a reference to Harold Bloom’s famous work: *Shakespeare, the invention of the human* (1998).
rather in the fact that he is a universally available resource, valuable, flexible, free, and allowing a vast number of reappropriations likely to generate new meanings. “It is this universal availability which constitutes the foundation of the cultural value of Shakespeare in the twenty-first century”, Linnermann stated (8). Shakespeare’s value is also based on his ability to contain, articulate and negotiate binaries, as the middle ground where tensions can interplay. In the live action of the theatre, the scenic space is not simply the place where the text is performed and illustrated, but where cultural structures become significant, in a three-dimensional world where these structures can interact with each other.

Because I believe that culture can be “a terrain on which there takes place a continual struggle over meaning, in which subordinate groups attempt to resist the imposition of meanings which bear the interests of dominant groups” (Storey ix), I have chosen to investigate how culture can relate to identity discourses – more specifically, how popular culture, as opposed to high culture assumptions, can dialogue with identities through the figure of Shakespeare in theatre performance.

One of my arguments is that as the stratification of culture is always subject to transformations and changes, then the boundaries between cultural divisions cannot be natural, universal, impermeable and immutable, but rather constructed, particular, porous and variable. I thus set myself to investigate examples in which the popularization of Shakespeare allows new or non-canonical interpretations, promotes visibility of new identities and resistance ground towards hegemonic and/or universalizing positions. This is especially the case because for many societies in the Western world, in detriment of popular expressions, the word ‘culture’ has been commonly accepted as “synonymous with the Eurocentric products of the symphonic hall, the opera house, the museum and the library […] disciplined, knowledgeable seriousness of purpose […] a feeling of reverence” (Levine 146).

The questions I sought to deal with were: How do we define the concepts of culture and its popular aspect? How have erudite and popular cultures been studied in the 20th and 21st centuries? Where does Shakespeare stand in the debate? How do traditional popular elements such as festivity, carnival and questions of cultural identity relate to Shakespeare’s name and works today in different contexts? How do we popularise Shakespeare?

To answers these questions, I started from a general and theoretical framework (theories) to particulars (festivals) and even more specific (a case study).
Adopting an interdisciplinary approach this investigation touches studies in the areas of anthropology, sociology, drama and literature.

As one will see in the first chapter of my memoire, “Shakespeare and popular culture”, studies on this topic have increased significantly in the last decades. Different ideals and conflicting perceptions of what is valuable and what is not have always been present in discussions about the definition, production and dissemination of culture, and in this chapter I propose an overview of theories and conceptualisations about the subject to understand better the evolution of and relationship between the debates. I have opted for a theoretical introduction based on a variety of opinions, to obtain a broader view of the issue at hand.

Strikingly enough, the study of popular Shakespeare in live performances has been relatively unexplored. Yet, Shakespeare’s plays were not originally conceived for other than performative ends. Any reflexion on the introduction or use of his plays in cultural studies should therefore take live practices into consideration. My investigation humbly aims at filling a small share of this void. I began searching for examples that democratise access to culture and artistic creation, and encourage critical appreciation of different expressions; that seek to share knowledge and experiences, as well as embracing the disparity, ambiguity and malleability of culture. To verify these ideas and refuse others (such as the imposition of fixed stratification of cultural expressions), I decided to work with two instances of the popular Shakespeare phenomenon today, investigating the use of Shakespeare as a flexible resource and his position in cultural negotiations: Shakespeare-dedicated festivals (chapter 2) throughout the world, and a Brazilian production of *Romeo and Juliet* (chapter 3).

My starting point was: how is Shakespeare demystified in festivals in general and in particular in *Romeu e Julieta*? I was interested in understanding why and how popular culture appropriates Shakespeare, as well as what the impact on his image and values is. Not from a point of view that insists on singularity, on the belief that one or another version is the ‘real’ thing, or on an ‘authentic’ text, but from a position that accepts the notion of plurality. There are, I think, different ways to produce new meanings and to fit into different cultural contexts.

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*For a totally different view, see Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (2003).*
The second chapter ("Shakespeare Festivals") is built upon historical grounds. It discusses the traditional practices of festival and carnival in Elizabethan England, then proceeds with the emergence of Shakespeare Festivals in the 18th century, and eventually tries to contextualize this phenomenon today, revealing its facets and examining the festivals’ tendency to dissolve barriers and contribute to the popularisation of Shakespeare.

Chapter 3 ("Romeu e Julieta") is a case study of a Brazilian production of the most famous love tragedy of all. I start with reflections on the post-colonial status of Brazil and questions around national identity, especially during that country’s Modernist movement which proposed an anthropophagous manifesto in order to develop a truly Brazilian identity. With a brief mention to the introduction of Shakespeare in Brazil, I move on to the presentation of Grupo Galpão and its popular roots. Lastly, I approach the production of *Romeu e Julieta* itself, to analyse the dialogues and meanings it has helped create since its first performance in 1992.

Not only must cross-cultural renderings of Shakespeare be analysed in their contemporary and local relevance, they must also be seen in relation to the meanings they generate from works originated in utterly different historical and cultural contexts. Textual and scenic signs usually reveal the intercultural dialogue between the original context and the colours, sounds and symbols of a local cultural tradition in which national and regional identities are built. As a consequence, in my research, I refuse to stratify the signs in considerations of more or less important, or to judge the cultures involved as superior or inferior. As an intercultural work, my mémoire proposes ground for the socializing and understanding of different cultures, avoiding canonical and stereotypical considerations.

Trying to avoid an extreme or naïve view of Shakespearean appropriation as a perfect and infallible political and revolutionary tool for popular culture, I examined cases in which Shakespeare has been refashioned in subtler and less overtly political statements. The Shakespeare festivals and the Brazilian production analysed here do not belong to specific Brechtian or Boalian currents. With all these considerations in

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5 All theatre, in a broad sense, is political, as it involves in some way the place of people in society, but here I refer to Patrice Pavis’s explanation: "On accordera que tout théâtre est nécessairement politique, puisqu’il inscrit les protagonistes dans la cité ou le groupe. L’expression désigne, de manière plus précise […] [les genres où] l’esthétique est alors subordonnée au combat politique jusqu’au point de dissoudre la forme théâtrale dans le débat d’idées" (378).

6 German director Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), who developed the idea of an ‘epic theatre’ as a forum for political ideas, and Brazilian director Augusto Boal (1931-2009), who
mind, I hope that my research will be relevant for future cultural and Shakespeare studies, and that it will be able to contribute to a broader (and plural) understanding of the intricacies of culture.

The methods used in this research are necessarily varied. Of course, they include the traditional study of important theoretical texts, of Shakespeare festivals, and of a particular play, namely *Romeo e Julieta*. But they also prove to be empiric, which explains why my work also includes the drawing of a table comparing Shakespeare festivals’ characteristics (this could be defined as a sort of festival ‘taxonomy’), practical observations (based on live performances in Australia and England as well as on the recording of *Romeo e Julieta* into a commercial DVD), a survey conducted in Australia on general assumptions about culture and Shakespeare’s position, and an interview with one of Grupo Galpão’s founding member, Eduardo Moreira⁷.

There were some difficulties in realising this project. First, for the sake of clarity, I had to translate a number of Brazilian texts, and unless specified, all translations are mine. Indeed, I systematically chose to quote from original works, which brings me to apologise for the copious, but necessary, number of footnotes. Moreover, scholarly literature devoted to festivals remains scarce, and it was far from easy to gain access to Brazilian bibliographic sources, despite a trip to the Shakespeare Institute (attached to the University of Birmingham) in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2011. Last but not least, the ephemeral nature of live performance also hampers analysis as it generally imposes presence *in situ*, and for obvious reasons, I was unable to attend all the festivals mentioned in the present study. Nonetheless, in the following pages, I hope to offer new critical perspectives in order to show how Shakespeare has become a popular cultural icon, and how the core issues of his plays continue to resonate with contemporary audiences.

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⁷ All these documents can be found in the Appendix section.

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founded a theatrical form used in radical political movements.
CHAPTER 1 - Shakespeare and popular culture

In *Popular Shakespeare* (2009), and like many others in the increasingly fashionable field of cultural studies and of several neighbouring disciplines, Stephen Purcell aimed at discussing a contemporary phenomenon called ‘Popular Shakespeare.’ Purcell began his analysis stating that this phenomenon is “at once ubiquitous and elusive [...] Not just a radical alternative to high-culture Shakespeare, it represents [...] an interrelated assortment of shifts, in what the name ‘Shakespeare’ means to us today” (5). Such a short quotation already poses several conceptual problems. What is culture? How is popular culture defined? How is that opposed to high culture? Who decides what belongs to each category? What for? What is Shakespeare’s place in this debate?

To start my investigation aiming to understand and position this phenomenon within contemporary contexts, to comprehend what Shakespeare means and how he is used to produce meanings and values today, this chapter will explore some attempts to define, examine and explain the complicated and often contradictory relationship between notions of culture, the popular, and Shakespeare.

1.1. Shakespeare and Popular Culture Studies

Increasingly significant, the studies of the relationships between popular culture and Shakespeare can count today with more specific research and theoretical support, helping illuminate our understanding of the Bard’s apparent ever-lasting and universal appeal. According to Robert Shaughnessy in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Popular Culture* (2007), the contemporary scholarship of Shakespeare and popular culture is

[...] concerned with the Shakespearean theatre and drama’s immersion within the festivities and folk customs, entertainment industries, and traditions of playing of its own time; [...] with the] reinvention, adaptation, citation and appropriation of the plays, [...] and the myths and histories that circulate around them, across a wide range of media in subsequent periods and cultures. (1)

My scope in this research comprehends some of these notions: festivity, the carnivalesque, and reinvention and appropriation of Shakespeare by popular culture in certain cultural contexts to assert international and national values. I shall start it with a discussion over the key concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘popular’.
1.2. Defining ‘culture’

Although I will attempt to present different views as clearly as possible, nothing in the fields involved in this research offers simple and clear-cut answers. Starting from the broadest of the concepts on this agenda, one can look at the word ‘culture’ from agricultural to anthropological perspectives. In 2010, Perry Meisel chose to use its etymological sense of ‘husbandry’, denoting “a reciprocal relation between species and environment” (xiv) – an original meaning which, in other authors, allowed the development from the cultivation of the environment to the cultivation of the mind, culminating in Matthew Arnold’s definition of culture as the civilized and corrective opponent to anarchy in *Culture and Anarchy* in 1869.

In anthropology, the wider meaning of ‘culture’ is restored, ensuring that it includes in its analysis all different elements that may be part of it, be they considered high or low, middle, artistic, moral, religious, etc. Arnoldian ideas of culture as ‘the best’ and ‘the finest’ were challenged resulting in broader and neutral definitions such as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1903, cited in Linnemann 39). Certainly, a view that encompasses *everything* provides room for tensions from within (high/low, global/local, etc) and allows the emergence of studies that focus on subjects such as the ‘pop.’

In her doctoral thesis entitled *Identifying Strategies for the Production and Reception of Shakespeare in Brazil and Argentina* (2001), Galery also based her explanation on broader definitions of culture and defined it as “a modelling or signifying system through which a group of human beings respond and give shape to the world surrounding them” (47). She explains that her definition was drawn from ideas of culture as being “a system of symbols by which man confers significance upon his own existence” (Clifford Geertz), and as opposed to nature: “everything universal in humankind relates to the natural order and is characterized by spontaneity; everything subject to a norm is cultural” (Lévi-Strauss). In the same perception, it has been affirmed that “a cultura se produz através da interação social dos indivíduos, que elaboram seus modos de pensar e de sentir, constroem seus valores, manejam suas identidades e diferenças e estabelecem suas rotinas.”

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8 All quotations were drawn from Patrice Pavis’s discussion in *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (1992) pp1-23, as stated in Galery (81).
9 “culture is produced through social interaction of individuals who elaborate their ways of thinking and feeling, build their values, manage their identities and differences and
All of these perspectives, although quoted from authors from different countries and in different periods, emphasize the collective, systematic, artificial and social quality of culture, working on the binaries nature/culture, natural/produced, universal/particular or relative, spontaneous/planned, instinct/learned, but without engaging on judgements of value, taste, what is good or bad; simply what it is and what it isn’t. In saying that culture is ‘learned’, for example, one does not necessarily (although some theorists do so) mean that it requires formal education. Cecil Sharp (English Folk-songs from the Southern Appalachians, 1932, cited in Linnemann 41) working on folk-songs in England and America, sees culture as founded in knowledge of folklore, as “being deeply immersed in one’s heritage” (41), learning from tradition, common inheritance and from sharing communal values. The anthropological concept also provides space for dialogue and negotiation, since it involves the accommodation of practices in groups, not just individually, where identities and differences are expressed.

Luciene Borges Ramos, in Centros de Cultura, Espaços de Informação (2008), argues that the broad anthropological sense of culture was replaced in the 20th century by a notion of culture as a process, as “os bens simbólicos produzidos e difundidos pelo circuito de distribuição comercial, dentro de um mercado de circulação monetária ou estatal.”10 ‘Culture’ enters then a commercial debate that also involves state policies over cultural manifestations through the arts (encompassing painting, photography, cinema, music, drama, dance, architecture, etc). Here, the sociological dimension of culture emerges in the debate to approach the artistic expression and the organization of these expressions in channels to offer and encourage the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods: “[…] é uma produção elaborada com a intenção explícita de construir determinados sentidos e alcançar algum tipo de público, através de meios específicos de expressão.”11 This is a more specific concept which can be useful for studies such as the present one, focusing on sets of practices and ideas produced by groups that are specialized in different forms of cultural manifestations – in this case, drama. However, more particular definitions of culture such as this one, when combined

10 “the symbolic goods produced and disseminated by the commercial distribution channel within a market of monetary or state circulation” (Marteleto, 1994:20 quoted in Ramos 41).
11 “is a production made with the explicit intention to build certain meanings and reach types of audience, through specific means of expression” (Botelho, 2001:74 quoted in Ramos 42).
with ideas of culture as civilization and of excellence, may eventuate in dangerous judgments of superior and inferior modes of expressions as well as categorization within those modes.

In the field of cultural studies, John Fiske affirms that culture “is neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political” (quoted in John Storey, 1994: viii). Storey, senior lecturer at the University of Sunderland, continues to explain that that means their object of study “is not culture defined in the narrow sense, as a process of aesthetic excellence (‘high art’); nor [...] as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual development” (viii), but culture as explained in Raymond Williams’ definition: a particular way of life, a particular culture, of a people, a period or a group (*The Long Revolution*, 1961:57). This definition “can embrace the first two definitions, but also, and crucially, it can range beyond the social exclusivity and narrowness of these, to include the popular culture of ‘the people’” (Storey viii).

In general, I abide by the anthropological and cultural studies perspective of culture, in the sense that I believe it encompasses all different systems (large or small) man employs to make meaning of the world, to understand and position himself in time and place, including traditional artistic expressions as well as fashion, behaviour, rituals, etc. But in this study, I will be focusing on one of the many elements present in culture, the artistic expression through theatre in specific contemporary contexts, discussing how they relate to notions of high and popular culture. I shall, then, pass now to a discussion of the ‘popular’.

### 1.3. Defining ‘the popular’

Another problematic term, the ‘popular’ is far from being defined with unanimous agreement. Shaugnessy lists several ideas linked to different conceptions of popular culture: “community, shared values, democratic participation, accessibility, and fun” as well as “the mass-produced commodity”, the “greatest common divisor”, “the reductive or the simplified, or the shoddy, the coarse, and the meretricious” (2). Popular culture can be seen as the opposite side of erudite or high culture which is associated with pure and noble art (but then, one has to define what pure and noble are) connected to elite values; or as the traditional expressions (through paintings, dance, music, objects, clothes, etc) and values of the lower classes; or it could be equated with mass culture, produced by the cultural industry (Ramos 43-44).
In *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Popular Culture* (2006) Stuart Gillespie and Neil Rhodes begin their discussion stating that they see the term ‘popular culture’ being employed today to define Hollywood, fast food and other commercial enterprises intended for mass consumption (reaching the highest indiscriminate number of people). However, they see that idea as typical of our times, indicating cultural products designed for the people, but not of the people. Culture of the people, they continue, belongs to an older use of the term: “Older forms of popular culture were for the most part not specifically commercial activities, and may be understood as the cultural expressions of the people themselves” (1), “encompassing holiday customs, seasonal rituals and other forms [...] gathered under the label of ‘folk tradition’” (7). In this sense, much of Shakespeare’s writing was created from these expressions considered popular, as being of the people.\(^{12}\)

In her article “From popular entertainment to literature” (2007), Diana E. Henderson takes another stance. Instead of considering ideas of popularity in exclusive categories associated with tradition or in binary views of high/low classes, she suggests (not without reserves) to think popularity in its range of spectators, of popular drama as

produced by and offered for the enjoyment or edification of the largest combinations of groupings possible in that society [...] Especially in a time of great social change, acknowledging breadth and variety of audience may be a more useful way to consider popularity than is using an inverted binary to seek out instances of the (oversimplified) ‘low’ triumphing over (an equally simplified) ‘elite’. (16)

Douglas Lanier, discussing contemporary popular culture in *Shakespeare and Modern Popular Culture* (2002), offers another perspective, a more political one. He also acknowledges the frequent view of popular culture as mass produced materials, but says that what we are missing is the recognition that

popular culture is also the uses – the social meanings, pleasures, and ways of life – that people make of those materials in their everyday lives. What makes popular culture popular is how it is used, not necessarily the size of its audience, its mass reproduction or its commerciality. Popular culture’s meanings and pleasures are created by ‘the people’ from a position of relative subordination or disempowerment within a social order. (50)

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Lanier presents an alternative to define it, disregarding specific categories of class, gender, ethnicity, education, etc, explaining that whatever the constitution of ‘the people’, popular culture “bears the traces of the contemporary society’s struggles between subordination and domination” (50).

This quite Marxist view is also found in John Fiske, who is against the idea that ‘the people’ are just a passive uncritical mass at the mercy of cultural industry and that ‘popular’ art is simply debased material for ‘cultural dopes’. He suggests we see ‘the people’ “as a multiple and constantly changing concept, a huge variety of social groups accommodating themselves with, or opposing themselves to, the dominant value system in a variety of ways […] in a dialectic relationship with the dominant classes” (Television Culture, 1987: 310). Therefore, ‘popular’ art is changing, transient, heterogenic, and the people who consume it do so from a relatively powerless position yet partially autonomous, “interpellated as consumers, though they may not respond in this manner” (310).

Basing my perspective on Mary Ellen Lamb’s ideas (1), I see the different views on what popular culture is as roughly summed up in three main categories: as a set of expressions that presume some sort of engagement against the dominant groups (Lanier, Fiske); one that is enjoyed/consumed by the majority of the population below the higher classes or the most diverse audience possible (Henderson); culture that is expressed through traditional practices related to festivities, memory, rituals, etc (Gillespie & Rhodes). In a way, popular culture can only be explained, evaluated, defended or attacked in relation to each theory defining it and generally opposing it to an idea of ‘high’ culture. To examine these positions, I will then proceed to a short presentation of the most important theories developed in the 20th and 21st centuries.

1.4. Theories in the 20th century: Mass culture

In this period, mass production, mass art and mass society are approached by most critics as a threat to high culture. With this anxiety inherited from the 19th century comes the idea that high culture (the fine arts, erudite literature, classical music) is for a minority, the privileged few (artists, certain writers and philosophers)

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13 A consequence of the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, as the clash between culture/technology, art/industry, national identity/imperial expansion, etc. See Goodall (1-21), Williams, Culture and Society (1983), Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (1869).
whose mission is to guard society’s culture against the threat of the debased standards of mass culture.

Q. D. Leavis and her husband, F. R. Leavis, both scholars in Cambridge, formulated similar arguments and saw traditional culture as the culture of the people, mainly the oral practices of a community seen as organic, outside elite groups in pre-industrial society\(^\text{14}\). But with the deep and irrevocable changes since the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century and mainly the advent of mass-media, traditional cultural expressions lost their place and the remaining void was filled by the access to culture mediated by mass-produced, debased and purely commercial products. Dwight Macdonald affirmed that “business enterprise found a profitable market in the cultural demands of the newly awakened [by political democracy and popular education] masses” (A theory of Mass Culture, 1957:59).

Mass culture is, then, regarded as cultural production imposed from above, not handmade by artists, but fabricated by businessmen for a passive mass of consumers. Similarly, the Frankfurt School for Social Research\(^\text{15}\), discussed popular culture as mechanically produce to deceive and mould the people’s tastes and preferences, “moulding their consciousness by inculcating the desire for false needs” (Strinatti 61); while true culture revealed the reality of social conditions and individual experience, a form of liberation to transcend the circumstances of its own production.

But not all critics concentrated on the differences between high and popular cultures. Harriet Hawkin in Classics and Trash (1990)\(^\text{16}\), for instance, investigated the presence of canonical 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century novels in twentieth-century popular fiction, suggesting that the relationship between these supposed levels of culture is much more complex, arguing that popular culture is not a parasite on the classics, and that culture in general is not simply stratified between classics and trash. Instead of people gaining knowledge from high culture to apply it to their real life experience, it was often through the experience of reading popular texts that they acquired the foundations to appreciate erudite works. A telling example is the blockbuster Romeo + Juliet (1996), by Baz Luhrman, contributing to stimulate youngsters’ interest in the playwright all around the world.

\(^{14}\) Q. D. Leavis, Fiction and the Reading Public (1939) and F.R. Leavis, Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture (1930).

\(^{15}\)Of Neo-Marxist current, with theorists like Theodor Adorno, Leo Löwenthal, Georg Lukács and Herbert Marcuse, especially, who shared these views in the 1920s, 1930s.

\(^{16}\) As commented on Goodall (41-2).
Other critics such as Raymond Williams, in *Culture and Society* (1957), saw cultural texts not as if they had an inherent sign that determines their status, but rather as an external construction by society. From this point of view, social practice determines which signs *tell* and *demand* from us, an attitude of admiration, or in the least, of respect. Thus, the status of texts is considered as subjective and variable, depending on social construction. These discussions deriving from theories dealing not with absolute, but relative values according to social, historical, economic and social contexts are relevant for the kind of analysis I engender in this research. I shall then move on to more recent theories developed in the wake of these positions searching to better accommodate the relationships between art and technology, machine and culture.

1.5. Theories in the postmodernist period

Different and more reconciliatory views in the 21st century saw democratic potential in the new media with optimism, considering an active, rather than completely passive attitude toward mass consumption.

In a way, in this period the machine began to be finally naturalised into culture and technology established its way into the exclusive realm of high art, while being an essential element of mass media art. Andreas Huyssen, in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986), calls the stratification of culture as high and low ‘the Great Divide’ (holding Theodor Adorno as its theorist par excellence); and the rejection of these theories and practices, the challenge posed against that dichotomy, he calls the ‘postmodernism’ (viii). Huyssen believes that in the last decades, the boundaries of those categories have become hazy and that this deserves to be regarded with optimism, not pessimism. A good example of that is *Pop Art*17, focused on the imagery of everyday life, fostering a new relationship between high culture and the popular.

Other critics18 argued that postmodernism directly and willingly incorporated popular texts, as art’s fascination with advertising and science fiction, for instance. These practices turned received conceptions upside down, revealing high culture as being built bottom-up, not top-down. The consideration of a sense of common

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purpose between art and business is a different path to the traditional animosity between culture and industry.

In the 1980s, views of popular culture in a counter-aesthetic position found prominence with Pierre Bourdieu\(^{19}\) (arguing that one’s capacity to understand and appreciate art is intimately associated to one’s social origins and level of education - both *acquired* positions, not *naturally* sprung), Mikhail Bakhtin\(^{20}\) (analysing the resistance of popular culture to the establishment through the carnivalesque), Michel de Certeau\(^{21}\) (identifying how people and popular culture actively reclaim autonomy and expropriate the dominant culture), and others.

Of course the abundance of new perspectives does not mean that the effacement of boundaries and hierarchy was easily and universally accepted. As I mentioned further above, Theodor Adorno, Max Horckeimer and others saw the culture industry as mass deception and some of these arguments are still widely shared even in the 2000s. “Even those perspectives who pride themselves on ‘taking popular culture seriously’ sometimes seem too apologetic and self-conscious when they make this case” (Strinati 33). In general, though, he believes that in postmodernism “there are no longer any agreed and inviolable criteria which can serve to differentiate art from popular culture” (207).

At the same time, many views that defended popular culture were also heavily criticised for being populist and uncritical of their own subject of study. Authors such as Meaghan Morris, *Banality in Cultural Studies* (1990) and Jim McGuigan, *Cultural Populism* (1993) argue that cultural populism risks becoming a simple inversion of the modernist critique of early 20\(^{th}\) century, stating now that there is no bad side to popular culture at all. It has, then, become hard to criticise it and the conclusion is that “not only is there a danger of praising popular texts for *not* being serious or intellectually challenging, but, from the opposite point of view, works which *are* serious or intellectually challenging can end up in the enemy camp, on the bad side of the cultural divide” (Goodall 78).

My position is inscribed within a postmodern set, as I think it is hard to deny the changes in the way we relate to mass media in the twenty-first century and that we must strive to come to terms with these transformations. However, as much as I believe in the collapse of the distinctions between high culture and popular culture,

\(^{19}\) *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste* (1984).
\(^{20}\) Bakhtin’s work *Rabelais and His World* (1968) will be discussed in chapter 2.
and that these are social constructions subject to change; I must say I think that breakdown is relative. Still today people in general commonly see sharp divisions in culture, unconsciously judging cultural expressions, sometimes automatically, without understanding why and how they make these distinctions. That is why my next topic is about the construction of Shakespeare’s position as one of the greatest icons of high culture.

1.6. Shakespeare as ‘high’ culture

In a survey conducted in Australia in December 2011, I collected answers from around 100 people at an upper class private school, famous for having had Prince Charles as one of its pupils. 47% of the staff members have completed a university degree and 30% have received a master’s degree, therefore, despite the infamous anti-intellectual Australian attitude, we are dealing with a rather educated and privileged group (30% declared an annual house income between $100,000 and $150,000).

That is a small sample, in a very specific context, certainly not representative of the whole of the Australian population, let alone of people in general. However, it can be useful as some sort of guidance on general feelings and reactions towards Shakespeare. 64% of the group feel they have been trained to think of Shakespeare as an essential part of their education, and the exact same percentage do believe that is the case. It seems then that they agree with the importance given to Shakespeare in education, even if they feel manipulated to think so. Unsurprisingly, 66% declared to believe in the culture hierarchy of high and low levels, and 83% of them placed Shakespeare within the first category. Since the highest number of answers (41%) affirmed that reading Shakespeare is difficult, one can associate high culture with difficult, highly respected (37%) works that are taught to be appreciated.

I am using this empiric data simply to justify the sound assumption that still today Shakespeare is generally and frequently associated with a notion of high culture. However, that has not always been the case. Shakespeare has been a classic

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22 See Appendix 1.
23 Geelong Grammar School, the most expensive school in Australia, or as some say, in the whole of the Southern Hemisphere. The Herald Sun, (October 21, 2011).
24 For a discussion on the ‘typical Australian’, see Ward, R. ‘Celts & Currency.’ (1977)
25 I focus here on the elevation of Shakespeare’s status in England, but the same could be said about his position in the USA. Lawrence Levine published in 1988 a groundbreaking work (Highbrow/Lowbrow) about the emergence of cultural hierarchy in the country, arguing that contrary to his own expectations, Shakespeare was popular entertainment in 19th century America, before the sacralization of culture (along with opera, symphonic
for such a long time now that the idea of his fitting popular culture has been obscured or taken for granted. But as Douglas Lanier explains in *Unpopularizing Shakespeare* (2002), Shakespeare’s special status stems from a complex history, one that shows the interplay of social forces, revealing how the playwright’s authority does not spring simply from a natural state, but as a social construction: “it is driven by specific cultural interests responding to developments in the theatre and publishing, the growing power and uncertain cultural status of a bourgeois middle class, the changing face of nationalism and colonialism, the professionalization of literary study...” (21). I shall now discuss some of these points.

Firstly, as discussed by Lanier, Holderness, Shaughnessy and Henderson, the process of elevation of Shakespeare’s works to a literary status started with the publication of a collected edition of his plays, now called the First Folio, in 1623. Bound in expensive material, calfskin, at £1 each (a fortune, considering that a skilled man could make £4 a year), “it put the book squarely within reach of only the wealthy; the earliest known owners include three earls, two bishops, a lord, an admiral...” (Rasmussen xiv). Fixing the art work in a written text, designed for the elite at such cost (and because most common people were still illiterate), and using this printing format for the first time for plays (usually reserved for historical or philosophical work) brought Shakespeare’s drama to a new level of literary quality that was parallel to the increasing stratification between indoor and outdoor theatre venues (Henderson 21). The ‘audience’ of the written text was no longer the mixed, unruly audience sharing an ephemeral artistic experience together, but the introspect individual reader, isolated in fancy drawing rooms, in his own separate environment. Converting the performative text to print

removed Shakespeare from a social space where immediate, irrational bodily pleasures [...] political and social fractiousness held sway. [...] now he] could be engaged rationally and dispassionately, experienced within a domestic space. [...] it] allowed Shakespeare to be [...] separated from association with the unruly elements of popular culture. (Lanier 30)

Theatre was increasingly being equated with more popular, sensorial forms while literature with high, cerebral culture. The printed text became an object one

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music and the fine arts) completed by the beginning of the 20th century. Levine argues that cultural expressions or objects can be simultaneously popular and elite, at times more one than the other, but always changing, never etched in stone: “To confine something as variable and dynamic as culture within rigid hierarchical divisions, which are then projected back into a past in which they did not yet exist, is to risk misunderstanding not merely our history but ourselves” (242).
could possess and show off, as symbol of their wealth, position and learning. Moreover, the opening text of the Folio is a preface written by Ben Jonson exalting Shakespeare as a figure that transcended his popular roots, placing him on the same level as the established Greek and Latin classics.  

Secondly, there was David Garrick’s Shakespeare Jubilee in 1769. This topic will be discussed in detail later on in chapter 2. For now, I shall simply observe that this event marks the “inauguration of bardolatry as a national religion [...] the point at which Shakespeare stopped being regarded as an increasingly popular and admirable dramatist, and became God” (Deelman 7). Starting with the Jubilee, by the mid-18th century Stratford had already become the centre of a kind of literary pilgrimage. The first Shakespeare Festival originated a series of events that today, paradoxically, contribute to the re-popularization of the Bard, but at the time, it elevated him to the holy space once occupied by God and the monarch, in religious and political festivity (these issues will be further discussed in chapter 2). Garrick’s plays that followed the Jubilee show “a reverence for Shakespeare [who] becomes a touchstone by which the British bourgeois distinguishes itself from foreigners and the vulgar commons” (Lanier 33).

In the 19th century, when Shakespeare became part of the academic curriculum his transition to ‘high’ culture was complete (Gillespie & Rhodes 2). Derek Longhurst, in ‘You base football-player!’ (1988), argues that the discourses constructed through national institutions of education are crucial in the process of canonization of Shakespeare:

> It is, surely, undeniable that the dominant figuration of Shakespeare within the institutions committed to the reproduction of the values of ‘high’ culture is articulated around his texts as embodiments of literary genius constituted in a coalescence of the ‘flowering’ of the English language and the (consequent?) ‘universal’ truths of human experience. (60-1)

In the 1960s, the aggressive and self-confident young generation stopped seeing Shakespeare and a literary education as a passport to social mobility but as identified with the Establishment and school culture, which turned them into targets of subversion and insurrection (Longhurst 63). That exemplifies the position of culture icon Shakespeare has come to occupy, to a certain extent, because of the

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26 For an analysis of Ben Jonson’s preface in the First Folio, see Lanier, pp.24-6.
educational system. The possession of Shakespeare within those institutions considered as the holders and guardians of ‘high’ culture also contributed to the spreading of the idea of Shakespeare as a national monument, especially since one of the most powerful institutions (the educational ones) were unified in a national level.

Lanier also mentions the use of Shakespeare as an instrument of enculturation through the university, as it became central to the development of English as a discipline in the latter half of the 19th century: “Already established as an English ‘classic’, Shakespeare had the requisite depth and complexity to replace Latin and Greek classics in higher education” (39). Moreover, the association of the playwright with the expansion of the British Empire “fostered the sense that English was to be the global lingua franca of modern nations” (39). And in that case, studying a great master of the language would be important for one’s knowledge of the language itself, regarded as an important civilizing tool. In 1878 and 1884, English was institutionalized as a discipline with Shakespeare at its core, at Cambridge and Oxford, respectively.

Also in the 19th century, there appeared ‘family’ editions of Shakespeare’s works, springing from a conviction that his plays could work as ‘strengtheners’ of virtue through adaptations in conformity with Victorian domestic mores, especially female ones (Lanier 35). In this way, the playwright became an agent of bourgeois socialization and regulation, even in the theatres, as they also were regulated by middle class moral codes:

The older forms of communal spectatorship – especially the unruliness of the pit – were being replaced by a class-inflected expectation that one would remain passive, quiet, and respectful. That is, although, theatre audiences came from nearly all social strata, their conduct and thus their experience of Shakespeare was increasingly regulated by genteel codes of decorum...seeing Shakespeare on stage would move away from being a communal, participatory activity towards an individual aesthetic experience akin to reading an illustrated edition. (36)

This reverential attitude in theatres has persisted well into the 21st century, as a general rule. However, telling examples that reject this attitude today can be found, mainly in outdoor performances and festivals and through the work of companies dedicated to demystify and re-popularise Shakespeare and the theatrical art. They will be extensively discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Here, I would like to focus on the relationship between Shakespeare and popular culture, as one must not forget that
despite the un-popularization of Shakespeare in different fronts, that has not fasten him as an absolute and exclusive possession of ‘high’ culture.

There have always been negotiations and accommodations within and between conflicting cultural forms and forces. As social construction, the cultural practices involving Shakespeare depend on, are influenced by and cannot be dissociated from other social practices that are mutable, unstable and susceptible to changes. Several of them have worked for his re-popularization, ‘wrestling’ him from the aristocracy and bourgeois middle-class, opening up opportunities for different and broader standards of inclusion and participation.

1.7. Shakespeare and popular theatre

The coexistence of Shakespeare’s high-cultural status with various other Shakespeares, produced, reproduced and exploited on stage, television, in the cinema, in parodies, music, iconography, tourism, everyday expressions, and as national and universal myth is intriguing and often conflicting. Examples of the flexible use of his name can be found in Italian opera as well as in pornographic movies28. Representations of Shakespeare as the man, the author and the works, may vary from reverential, traditional, respectful, witty, and critical to silly, comic, cheeky, mocking, disrespectful, delinquent and insulting, depending on how you view them.

In Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture (1930), F. R. Leavis declared that Shakespeare was not a high-brow and explained it as an accommodation of both statuses: “there were no ‘high-brows’ in Shakespeare’s time. It was possible for Shakespeare to write plays that were at once popular drama and poetry that could be appreciated only by an educated minority” (28). However, still today, debates around the appropriation and production of Shakespeare are inextricably linked with questions of status, class, value, cultural ownership and educational achievement.

Shakespeare seems today to be everywhere, even beyond television, movies and theatre, as we find him in musicals, advertisements, toys, children’s books, computer games, etc. At the same time, Shakespeare still stands apart from these subdivisions of what is commonly seen as popular culture, representing an icon of

28 E.g.: Giuseppe Verdi’s opera Othello (1887) and In the Flesh (dir. Stuart Canterbury, 1999), a pornographic version of Macbeth.
high culture. Douglas Lanier exposes a common perception about Shakespeare and popular culture:

> Popular culture, so the story goes, is aesthetically unsophisticated, disposable, immediately accessible and therefore shallow, concerned with immediate pleasures and effects, unprogressive in its politics, aimed at the lowest common denominator, mass-produced by corporations for financial gain. By contrast, Shakespeare is aesthetically refined, timeless, complex and intellectually challenging, concerned with lasting truths of the human condition and not fleeting political issues, addressed to those few willing to devote themselves to laborious study, produced by a single genius ‘not of an age but for all time’. (3)

As one can see, the ideas in this perception revolve mainly around a view of popular culture as mass-culture, for the highest number of people, for the better financial return, as imposed from above, debased in its values and too easy to absorb, without intellectual effort. Shakespeare is the elite, untouchable icon, exclusive, belonging to the realm of art, difficult, naturally perfect, dealing with universal issues and comprehended by a minority.

But the multiplicity of Shakespeare representations today complicate that simplifying assumption, even though this variety is not new because, as Richard Burt claims, he “has always been ‘Shakespeares’, mediatised and subject to dislocation, decontextualiz[ed], and fragment[ed] as the texts were revised, performed, printed and otherwise circulated [...]” (Shakespeares after Shakespeare, 2007: 3). Because of this multiplicity and the complexity of such concepts as “culture”, the “popular”, and how Shakespeare stands within and between them, it is not an easy task to define ‘popular theatre’ or ‘popular Shakespeare’. I will try, nonetheless, to present different discussions and perceptions over the subject.

In his Dictionnaire du Théâtre (1996), Patrice Pavis argues that the idea of popular theatre is more sociologic than aesthetic, which would then define it as an art that addresses and/or springs from the popular masses. However, such definition is not so simple: “L’ambigüité est à son comble lorsqu’on se demande s’il s’agit d’un théâtre issu du peuple ou destiné au peuple. Et d’ailleurs, qu’est-ce que le peuple et [...] le peuple est-il encore populaire?” (378).

Stephen Purcell offers answers to these questions that vary from defining popular theatre as “working-class entertainment” (John McGrath), as associated “with democratic, proletarian, and politically progressive theatre” (Joel Schechter), as that which “beguiles and amuses, rests and relaxes the mind, encourages
conviviality and satisfaction with things as they are” (David Mayer)\(^{29}\) and, last but not least, as “anti-authoritarian, anti-traditional, anti-pomp, anti-pretence” (Peter Brook in *Popular Shakespeare*, 2009: 9). What can we then distill from these and other views on popular theatre?

Firstly, there is a tendency to equate popular culture with commercial entertainment offered through mass reproduced media to a very large number of people. Stuart Hall calls this a ‘market’ definition, “quite rightly associated with the manipulation and debasement of the culture of the people” (*Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular’,* 1981: 446). A branch of this view sets popular culture as dependent upon wide approval from and identification with a large audience, as opposed to high culture which demands reverence and distance, and disregard its entertainment value or the size of its audience. As a guiding example of popular theatre under this perception, the West End musicals in London would fit perfectly, as a commercial product that encourages a satisfied attitude towards things as they are (Purcell 9).

Parallel to that commercial meaning, there is popular culture as genuinely belonging to the people, a working-class or egalitarian alternative to ‘great tradition’, exclusively owned by the dominant minority and cultural institutions. A popular theatre in this sense would have to speak to the people in the same language as them, representing and giving voice to their own fears and joys. This model opens itself up to social inclusion, meaning to embrace the largest and most heterogeneous (within the lower social and cultural classes) underserved groups of people. If in this case, popular theatre is defined by its audience and seeks to foster inclusion and cultural democracy, then the West End musicals could no longer fit as popular theatre, since their high ticket prices and “implied intimations of social aspiration” (Purcell 11) do not work towards inclusion and equality.

Within this perception of popular theatre as being of the people, another stem associates it with popular traditions of festivity and communal celebrations, including the circus, parades, carnival, pageants, vaudeville, music hall, etc. One of its main assets lies on its capacity to build a sense of community within the audience and with the actors, albeit temporarily. Sharing a collective imaginative experience, it leads people out of loneliness and may strengthen a group identity – a quality that can also pose some problems, for it may serve conservative or progressive political purposes. While it can endorse important values (e.g. regional identity, events to

\(^{29}\) All quoted in Purcell 15.
celebrate and remember), it is also bound to subvert others (e.g. prejudice between
modes of expression and forms of culture).

Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory on the carnivalesque and festivity defends their
ambivalent quality, explaining that carnival laughter “asserts and denies, it buries and
revives […] it is also directed at those who laugh [the spectators]…they also die and
are revived and renewed” (12). Here, popular theatre must involve criticism and
laughing not only at the world out of its representation, but also the one within, along
with its participants.

In keeping with such ideas, we find that popular audiences may rely on
mass-culture (as well as on popular traditions) as raw material to produce other
meanings in the audience’s own spatial and temporal contexts, possibly contrary or
divergent to those originally intended by the “culture industry”30. Popular audiences
may then feel free to appropriate popular and high culture for their own ends, and
that has certainly been the case for Shakespeare. Richard Burt affirmed in
Shakespeares after Shakespeare that “Shakespeare is called up to defend or resist
various social and political agendas and values in mass media” (4) and I must add, in
other popular cultural manifestations as well, such as the ones based on tradition,
festivity and carnival, which are the objects of my study in chapters 2 and 3.

This appropriation of Shakespeare by the mass media and traditional popular
culture has made use of that high-culture icon in interesting ways. Firstly,
Shakespeare has been used to legitimate new media, such as the movies, then the
radio, after, the television, and even the internet, with, for example the Royal
Shakespeare Company twitter version of Romeo and Juliet31. Lanier confirmed this
legitimating power:

[...] Shakespeare serves as a trademark for time-tested quality and
wisdom, and so it lends legitimacy to whatever it is associated
with. Because of his extraordinary cultural authority […]
Shakespeare becomes a means by which […] ‘certain ways of
thinking about the world may be promoted and others impeded. (9)

30 A term coined by Adorno and Horkheimer, theorists of the Frankfurt School, in 1944, to
describe the processes and products of mass culture. “It is a culture which produces
satisfaction in the here and now, depoliticizing the working class, limiting its horizon to
political and economic goals that can be achieved within the oppressive and exploitative
framework of capitalist society” (John Storey, Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, 1994:
194).

31 Entitled “Such Tweet Sorrow”, it was produced in 2010. For more on this production, see
Linnemann, The Cultural Value of Shakespeare in 21st Century Publicly-Funded Theatre in
Shakespeare is thus used to substantiate artistic and moral respectability. But another and more intriguing way in which Shakespeare has been appropriated is through parody. If invoking his iconic status may legitimise practices, it may also serve to resist and criticise the practices, values and institutions associated with high culture:

These appropriations target the sorts of social and interpretive decorum that govern how high art is treated, as well as those who enforce that decorum, authority figures like teachers, intellectuals, antiquarians, actors, and bluebloods. Paradoxically, this sort of appropriation reinforces the high cultural image of Shakespeare at the same time as it critiques those who support that image. (Lanier 54)

Interestingly, these parodical appropriations also relate to Bakhtin’s theory of the carnivalesque, once again, in the inversion or suspension of the ‘official’ culture to mock and criticise the Establishment.

Even more intriguing is the possibility of different faces and uses of Shakespeare in popular theatre and culture co-existing in the same element. It is the case of the Globe Theatre in London, as its dependence on “the academy, the heritage industry, tourism, and sponsorship [...] compromise its claim to present a people’s Shakespeare; at the same time, its inexpensive ticket prices [600 at £5] [...] and widespread appeal ensure that audiences are socially and culturally diverse” (Purcell 18). Appropriation of Shakespeare’s name for legitimising and undermining purposes at the same time can also be found in advertisements, in a combination of respectful recognition and playful parody.

What is revealed from these discussions is Shakespeare’s heterogeneous cultural presence, how the ‘people’ are more a shifting group of allegiances than a rigid category of dopes or revolutionaries, and how popular theatre is a site of tension and negotiation between perceptions, interests and values within the society as a whole. Popular culture exploits Shakespeare for cultural authority and to create meanings through interplay between cultural systems and institutions. Holding a special status with a double life,

Shakespeare is recognizable to highbrow and lowbrow audiences (though not in the same ways), and serves important iconic functions in both canonical and popular culture. And popular culture is a powerful cultural mechanism through which that recognition (and misrecognition) is sustained. (Lanier 18)

32 For examples and analyses of allusion, citation and parody of Shakespeare, see Lanier 50-109.
Because of Shakespeare’s flexible status, of the fluidity of shifting categories, and of the possibilities of reinvention, appropriation and adaptation, my position towards the concepts of culture, the popular, and their connection with Shakespeare is one that does not regard these relationships on the basis of levels, superiority, evaluation and categorisation of cultural expressions as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. I see them rather as instances of language, of social constructions, in constant exchange, shift, and negotiation. However, for the purposes of the discussions in the next two chapters, I will be referring to these concepts in relation to more common and concrete categories that are widely accepted.

High or erudite culture will be used corresponding to a sum of discourses based on academic criteria, literacy, formal higher education, privileged financial means, and therefore as belonging to a minority, generally holder of economic, social and political power. Popular culture will refer to other than formal sources of knowledge, including traditional practices, folklore, customs and oral transmission of memory, to communal values and essentially shared practices, as well as to a site of identification and vindication of identities. When necessary to refer to the dissemination of entertainment and information through mass media, I will be using the term “mass culture”, but without automatically imbuing negative connotations to it.

Beginning with the traditional notions of popular culture, I will be looking at the topic of festivities in Shakespeare’s time to contextualize, analyse and explain the phenomenon of Shakespeare festivals today.
CHAPTER 2 - Shakespeare festivals

2.1. Festivity in Elizabethan England

The Elizabethan times (around the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1558-1603) were imbedded in a world of festivity and holiday from which Shakespeare and his contemporaries drew widely to recreate events and traditions in their plays. Mikhail Bakhtin and François Laroque are two of the greatest names in the studies of festivities and the carnivalesque.

Mikhail Bakhtin, in Rabelais and his World (1965) brought to light how the carnivalesque was greatly influenced by folk humour of popular ritual and spectacle, through his analysis of Gargantua and Pantagruel. Bakhtin’s work reveals the fundamental interaction of the people in carnival festivities and he explains that carnival does not acknowledge any separation between actors and audience: “Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people: they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people” (7 my italics).

In Shakespeare’s Festive World (1991), Laroque exposes the main festive events and customs of the time to explain Shakespeare’s debt to folklore and popular celebrations: “Festivity is a social manifestation linked with natural and seasonal cycles and rooted in a so-called archaic vision of time and the cosmos...Oral transmission was the rule in popular festivity” (3). In accordance with Bakhtin’s and Laroque’s arguments, then, it seems indeed that the fundamental nature of festivals rested on dance, music, colour, costume, movement, gestures, and most importantly, in the participation of the crowd.

Laroque is convinced that the Renaissance was pervaded by a spirit of periodic celebration and festivity in which all played a part: “It is primarily because English popular culture of the Renaissance is so closely associated with festivals that it appears as a commitment to a joyous world and way of life” (33). The myth of the ‘Merrie England’ that exists still today goes back to those joyful festivities of the Renaissance and beyond (from the Middle Ages to Pre-Industrial society), and to

33 Collection of “five comic novels by François Rabelais, published between 1532 and 1564. The novels present the comic and satiric story of the giant Gargantua and his son Pantagruel, and various companions, whose travels and adventures are a vehicle for ridicule of the follies and superstitions of the times.” Encyclopaedia Britannica online version, library edition. Entry: Gargantua and Pantagruel.
34 According to Carnival’s primary meaning: “The season immediately preceding Lent, devoted […] to revelry and riotous amusement.” OED online version. Entry: Carnival.
many people it is linked to an image of the ‘doublet and hose.’ I believe festivals and Shakespeare’s plays have helped imprint that impression and they might partly explain the eagerness for ‘authentic’ costuming in Shakespeare productions today.

Medieval and Renaissance attire generally involves ideal views of those times as a “lost golden world of voluntary craft labour”, to use Michael Dobson’s expression in *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance*, 2011 (194). The frequency of the use of ‘authentic’ costuming goes along those nostalgic ideals, they are treated as a sort of de facto national dress...[in a] juxtaposition of old-style Shakespearean clothing with real locations, locations which ideally belong to an idyllic pastoral English landscape, or which incorporate historic buildings equally charged with associations of national heritage and continuity. (194)

However, popular festivities were not always well regarded by all. Puritans, for instance, opposed the unrestrained laughter, the ‘waste’, and the ‘immorality’ of popular festivals, as they regarded gravity as a virtue. Generally speaking, popular practices were often linked with hedonism and heathenism. The provincial élites, increasingly desirous of social distinction, also began to see popular festivity as vulgar and unsuitable for those in search of refinement and a higher social position. Others simply found popular festivities cruel and violent, not least because such festive occasions often involved jokes about cripples, accidents in games and sports, etc (Laroque 31,36-7).

The subsequent persecution of those festivities had great impact on the nature of Renaissance festivals which, as a result, became fairly different from medieval ones. They were Anglicanized (the use of vernacular English was an important premise of the Reformation), simplified (with condemnation of the spectacular nature of the Catholic service) and reduced in number of feast days. Examples of new or transformed festivities are Guy Fawkes’s Day every year on the 5th of November and the Lord Mayor’s Show on the 28th of October.

But even royal decrees against certain festivals did not cause their total extinction. For most pre-Reformation religious festivals that were revoked, new and civic festivals (of national and Protestant nature) emerged. More often than not, new festival dates coincided with the old Catholic calendar; sometimes the nature of the celebration was kept and was merely transferred to other dates; or names and reasons

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35 Traditional Elizabethan costumes.
36 Date according to Laroque (8), during the Elizabethan age. Today, it’s celebrated on the second Saturday of November.
were simply changed. In fact, that process of replacement was not new, as the festive Catholic calendar put in place with the advent of Christianity was more of a fusion of the old pagan, pre-Christian calendars and celebrations (Laroque 16, 19 and 77).

Interestingly, both the Tudors and the Stuarts used festivity as a tool of the government, a channel for popular energies to release tension. Laroque explains that Elizabeth’s accession to the throne ushered in a veritable rejuvenation of festivity. Court activities and the queen’s visit to the provinces were timed to coincide with various symbolic dates [...] producing the impression that it was royal festivity that provided the general impulse and rhythm for all the different rites and celebrations that took place in the various provinces and at all social levels. The monarchy usurped the place of the Church, with the result that the erstwhile cult of the Virgin and saints was now transferred to the sovereign and her entourage. (9)

Queen Elizabeth seemed to have understood the power of festivity in society (with displays of liberality and merriment) and her emphasis on celebrations certainly influenced the mystification of her reign to coincide with the return to the Golden Age. Thus, partially influenced by royal ideological use and despite religious and social conflicts, festivity was found in all social levels in the 16th century. When Oliver Cromwell won over the Royalists (in the 1640s), he managed to suppress most feast days and was met with great popular resentment. Festivals seemed to have remained a very important element in the people’s vision of the world and of time and they had not found in Puritanism any substitute for that loss (Laroque 76).

Paradoxically, but also proving the point that strict definitions of high and low can only very loosely be applied in culture, the ideological use of festivals I have commented upon was assisted by some similarities between two otherwise opposite domains of festivities: the popular and the aristocratic. Celebrations happened on the same dates both at court and in the country, and they both enjoyed music, dancing, feasting and masquerade (Henry VIII, it seems, enjoyed disguising himself as Robin Hood, a popular champion). Moreover, many of those royal events were free and available to all, attracting the crowds. It was far more common to find elements of popular culture permeating aristocratic culture and, in exchange, popular culture appropriating aristocratic themes (Arthurian legends, for instance), than one might think (Laroque 183). With these considerations in place, it seems difficult to draw a specific line between popular and aristocratic festivals, as it is part of their nature to blur “the established dividing lines between the different social classes, sexes and
age-groups, linking them in new relationships of an altogether unpredictable nature” (182).

Elizabethan dramatists took advantage of this ‘unpredictable nature’ of the relationships in society during festivals, as well as of those general four circumstances, drawing from them parts of their scenarios and plots.

2.1.1. Theatre and festivity

As both Laroque and Henderson demonstrate, theatre had an important function during holidays, especially during the Christmas season, as part and parcel of folk traditions. During this celebration, the Lord Of Misrule disturbed order: social norm and conventional hierarchies were upset through mockery and misrule in live dramatic performances, the world was turned upside down and sometimes perverted, and subversion was aimed to destabilize authority with fun. Laroque points out that the term ‘misrule’ referred “both to the anarchy and disorder that resulted from tyrannical and arbitrary government and also to the joyful pandemonium that ensued when the world was turned upside-down and festive confusion reigned” (26). It questioned and destabilised the established order.

However, there are different ways to approach this destabilisation. Henderson explains that misrule played an important role contrasting holiday and everyday worlds, but it could be interpreted as a parody of mutinous feelings on the part of the commons, as a manoeuvre on the part of the monarchy to build a post-feudal national awareness, or yet as tools for the elite to express its dissatisfaction (12). Laroque affirms that all the mockery and subversion did not really challenge the established order, but rather made it more bearable, “at a time when there was no possibility of ousting or undermining it through the ballot-box” (64).

Regardless of one’s point of view – whether this theatre practice of misrule served to bridge, attenuate or expose social divisions – it seems that festivity and theatre’s social importance in Elizabethan society were evident. That importance was

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37 Another important work on festivity is Roger Caillois’, *L’Homme et le Sacré* (1983), analyzing the essentially ambiguous human nature towards the sacred, in a surprising comparison between festivals and war.

38 The Lord of Misrule was the “official of the late medieval and early Tudor period in England, who was specially appointed to manage the Christmas festivities held at court, in the houses of great noblemen, in the law schools of the Inns of Court, and in many of the colleges at the universities of Cambridge and Oxford. During his reign, which lasted anywhere from 12 days to 3 months, the Lord of Misrule was responsible for arranging and directing all Christmas entertainment, including elaborate masques and processions, plays, and feasts.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* online version, library edition. Entry: Lord of Misrule.
partially secured in a debt to popular culture. As Henderson categorically affirms, “without doubt, Elizabethan stagecraft was deeply indebted to popular traditions, genres, and performance conventions, and of its many script-writers Shakespeare...was as immersed as anyone” (13).

The festive background of Elizabethan England obviously had a great impact on its dramatic productions. Very much aware of the popular demands and eager to cater for them, companies and their playwrights were keen to draw their productions and inspiration from legends, traditions and myths linked to celebrations from the calendary festivals. Drama was primarily the most popular medium of entertainment, in comparison to poetry and prose, and the location and design (next to whorehouses and bear and bull baiting arenas, or other animal fighting pits, which could take place even inside the theatres) of the playhouses tell us much about the kind of relationship they bore with popular crowds. “It is also clear that the theatre was not necessarily first and foremost a temple of high culture, but might be primarily a place for having fun, rather than an instrument of privileged communication” (Laroque 180).

Moreover, from what is known about the audience and their attitudes in the Elizabethan theatre, dramatic performances at the time resembled very much the atmosphere of holidays and festivals, considering the public interaction with the actors and among themselves, how they ate, drank, smoked and chatted during the show and the fact that most of those spectators were the same who would gather to enjoy pageants, processions, May Day games and dances. Laroque clearly states that dramatic performances were not just distractions or entertainments; they constituted festivals of a kind, to be enjoyed on holidays. And this was even more true of the court, where dramatic productions in the ‘Season of the Revels’ were in principle put on to coincide with some feast day (such as New Year’s Day, Twelfth Night or Candlemas). (181)

Having demonstrated the intricate net that associates popular culture, festivity and drama together, I shall now explore more specifically the topic of theatre festivals dedicated to William Shakespeare.

2.2. The genesis of Shakespeare festivals

The Oxford English Dictionary records the meaning and use of the word ‘festival’ in three different ways. So far I have used it in a broader and more ancient

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39 See Andrew Gurr, Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London (2004) for a detailed comparison between the behaviour of an audience now (trained to see, as spectators, in solitary contemplation) and then (that went to the theatre mainly to listen, as auditors, and gathered as a crowd).
sense, as appropriately applied to Elizabethan times:

adj. 1. Of or pertaining to a feast, befitting a feast-day.
[Example:] a1616 SHAKESPEARE King John (1623) iii. i. 2 This blessed day, Euer in France shall be kept festiuall.

n. 1.a. A time of festive celebration, a festal day. Also occasionally, a festive celebration, merry-making.
[Example:] 1820 W. IRVING Sketch Bk. II. 30 Of all the old festivals, that of Christmas awakens the...most heartfelt associations.

More suitable to our contemporary use of the word and the context of the subsequent topics of this research is the following meaning of the word:

n. 1.b. A musical performance or series of performances at recurring periods...Also applied to a series of films, theatrical performances, etc.
[Examples:] 1864. Chambers's Jrnl. Shaks. Tercentenary No. 2/1, At the present moment, when a grand Tercentenary Festival of the birth of Shakespeare is about to be celebrated at his native place. 1970 G. SPANIER And now it's Sables 133 Every summer in Paris we have an International Theatre Festival.

With these notions in mind, let’s now look at the origins of Shakespeare Festivals. Shakespearean scholarship has proven to be highly contentious about several things involving the playwright. On one thing, however, most writers discussing festivals seem to agree: that all Shakespeare festivals (as well as ‘bardolatry’) throughout the centuries owe their existence and popularity to the efforts of one man, David Garrick.40

With a long acting career (1741-1776) and as an actor-manager of Drury Lane Theatre, Garrick dedicated a great part of his artistic life to promote Shakespeare and his works. The most famous actor of his time, Garrick was invited to inaugurate Stratford’s new Town Hall and, at the same time, was allured to offer a statue of Shakespeare for the occasion. As presented in Levi Fox’s A Splendid Occasion (1973), letters exchanged between important people in town reveal how they saw this opportunity as a chance for Stratford to take an important place in literary pilgrimage. In addition, those letters also reveal that they clearly realised the potential benefits for innkeepers, caterers, fashionable ladies and the subsequent commercial activities behind making dresses and accessories for the occasion (the festival included a masquerade ball), etc, in promoting such event (7).

40 For detailed studies and descriptions of Garrick’s Jubilee, see Garrick’s Folly (1964), by Johanne M. Stochholm; The Great Shakespeare Jubilee (1964), by Christian Deelman; and A Splendid Occasion (1973), by Levi Fox.
41 For Garrick’s complete biography, see Oxford DNB.
In the background, there was a plan by the city of Stratford to associate Shakespeare’s name and hometown with the leading actor of the day through the inauguration of its new and important building. At the same time, considering the resulting general attitude of veneration for Shakespeare in England (and on the continent), the Jubilee served, on a national level, to mark “the growing recognition of the genius of Shakespeare and of his birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon itself” (Fox, 6). Fox insists on the point, explaining that the Jubilee served as an opportunity for Shakespeare’s devotees “for making amends [referring to recent strife over Shakespeare’s properties in town] to the good name of Britain’s national poet” (9 my italics).

The festival, called the Shakespeare Jubilee, was planned to take place between 6 and 8 September 1769 and included a horse race, a masquerade ball, fireworks, music and a much anticipated pageant (a procession of Shakespeare’s characters) in grand style. An amphitheatre was especially commissioned and built for that purpose. The idea of attracting tourists and great publicity to the event and to the city of Stratford worked very well and evidence (letters and newspaper announcements and reviews) supports Fox’s affirmation that “this was to be a Jubilee, the like of which had never seen before” (17). It’s worthy to include here one of these supporting pieces of evidence:

> In short, all is Joy and Festivity here, and what with the Rattling of Coaches, the Blazing and Cracking of Fireworks, the Number of People going and coming from the Mask Warehouse, whither they repair to provide themselves with Dresses, my Head is almost turned, and I think I may venture to say I shall never see such another Scene in all my Life. (a correspondent to Lloyd’s Evening Post, 04/09/1769, cited in Fox, 17)

However, before the actual ‘kick-off’, problems abounded, exhausting Garrick and others involved in the festival’s preparation: the amphitheatre was far from being completed just two weeks before the Jubilee; there were several setbacks regarding lodging price, offer and adequacy; there was an initial apathy of the townspeople, etc. In time, most people realised that that celebration was going to be a rewarding and fashionable social occasion. Nearly miraculously, everything was finally ready by the opening day.

With firing of the cannons and much anticipation, the Jubilee was launched at the dawn of 6 September 1769. The first day was reportedly an “uninterrupted programme of light-hearted pleasure and colourful festivity” (Fox 17). Then, on that
night, the rain that made this story tragically famous started and did not fully yield until the festivities were over. On the second day, the awaited pageant had to be postponed because of the rain. Nonetheless, Garrick performed in the amphitheatre his legendary Ode upon Dedicating a Building, and Erecting a Statue, to Shakespeare, containing those which became his most famous lines about “the god of our idolatry”, admittedly the highlight of the Jubilee. The fireworks were nearly all soaked, but the masquerade ball took place at night where the fashionable society attended in large numbers, leaving only in the early morning amidst an Avon that had begun to overflow.

On the third day, there was no hope to perform the pageant; it had to be cancelled for good. All the same, the horse race came about and fireworks closed the festival when the rain recessed. Despite Garrick’s despair over what went wrong during the festivities, later accounts considered the event “the most splendid Jubilee that ever was plan’d or executed in England.” (Benjamin Victor in History of the Theatres of London, 1771, cited by Fox, 22)

Considering the speed of communications at the time and their limitations, the festival seems to have had a remarkable effect on Shakespeare’s town, country and fame. In the aftermath of the events, the London theatre season was inundated with plays, parodies, prologues, masques, pantomimes and comments (both extremely positive and negative) on and about the events in Stratford. Christian Deelman, in The Great Shakespeare Jubilee (1964), explains that from the accounts and outcomes of the Jubilee, it clearly stands as an exceptional event in the cultural history of the time: “[i]n an age of classical restraint, it stood out as an example of illogical but splendid hero-worship. It was both ridiculous and impressive” (7).

The Jubilee truly made an impact at a national level, as Garrick’s Ode was published and subsequently performed in different towns (Canterbury, Birmingham), and ideas for festivals started to appear everywhere (London, Leicester), whether serious or parodical. Even in the continent there was much talk and action involving the Jubilee: “In 1777 a retaliatory Jubilee was organised by supporters of Voltaire, in Paris, to commemorate the arch-enemy of Shakespeare” and “two Jubilees were held in Germany, in imitation of Garrick’s”, reports Deelman (265). Garrick himself put on a grand musical spectacle telling the story of the Jubilee in a humorous way in Drury Lane – and this time the famed pageant actually happened. It was a tremendous success.
Meanwhile, Stratford saw great potential in turning the city into a touristic destination. Councillors and clerks tried to approach Garrick once again, now to establish an annual celebration. The actor, definitely not interested in getting involved with them again in any kind of event, did suggest that they hold an annual commemoration on Shakespeare’s birthday, in which “the Bells should ring, & Bonfires should blaze, ye Ladies should dance, & the Gentlemen be Merry & Wise, viz: End ye day in Mirth, & Good-fellowship” (Garrick’s letter to William Eaves, 1771, quoted in Deelman 289).

With that idea Garrick unintentionally (or not) planted a seed hinting to the future of the town. Since then, every major anniversary involving the poet has been celebrated in Stratford, even if it began in a small-scale. Persisting in a religious allegory that permeates his book, Deelman goes as far as to say that in the 20th century (in this case, in 1964), “[n]o other birthday, with the sole exception of that of Christ Himself, has ever received such attention” (5). According to Deelman’s account, events and ideas related to the celebrations after Garrick’s Jubilee began to take greater shape in 1816, and slowly carried on through 1820, 1824, 1826, 1827, 1830 (the second triennial commemoration, considered the most ambitious and successful event since Garrick’s, receiving even Royal patronage), building a momentum in 1847 and culminating in 1864 with a splendid two-week festival. By 1879, a permanent Shakespeare Memorial Theatre was built, which stands (still today, in the form of another theatre) almost on the same spot as Garrick’s amphitheatre.

The repercussion of these events reveals the remarkable amount of public interest in the topic, the reflection of a “national mood, centred round one of the most remarkable personalities the stage has ever produced...it [the Jubilee] marked the real beginning of Stratford’s tourist and souvenir industry... [coming to be] a unique literary Mecca” (Fox 23). With the same religious metaphor, Deelman states that the Jubilee “marks the point at which Shakespeare stopped being regarded as an increasingly popular and admirable dramatist, and became a god” (7).

Certainly, the analyses differ in their slightly more positive or critical position regarding the events. To Levi Fox, who had a favourable view, the Jubilee represents the “birth of the idea of festival in general in this country...one of the ‘splendid

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42 For a list of events related to Shakespeare anniversaries in the world, see [http://www.shakespeareanniversary.org/](http://www.shakespeareanniversary.org/)
occasions’ of English history” (23). Christian Deelman focused on what went wrong, on how some people, including Garrick himself, viewed the festival as a “gigantically comic fiasco” and on how, in the long term, the events revealed side-effects of cult and “unpleasant religiosity” around Shakespeare (6). But both agree on the importance of the Jubilee as the core concept of Shakespeare celebrations from which all modern festivals stem. Many others support these claims, such as Michael Dobson, in his *Shakespeare and Amateur Performance* (2011), who shows how Shakespeare, the land and an idea of Englishness are tied together in cultural events that have not received enough scholarly attention up to now:

Garrick’s impulse to take Shakespeare’s characters outside into the fresh English air, to identify the works of the newly crowned national poet with the rural heartland of his country, is an impulse which for the last century and more has haunted the British performance history of the canon to a vast and hitherto unacknowledged extent. (163)

This association between Garrick and the profusion of Shakespeare festivals today has also been recognized by Marcus D. Gregio, who believes that Garrick is indirectly responsible for launching almost every company promoting them today. Gregio ended his acknowledgements in *Shakespeare Festivals around the World* (2004) saying: “the next time that you hear a play attributed to William Shakespeare, join me in thinking an affectionate thought for David Garrick” (13).

2.3. Shakespeare festivals around the (English speaking) world today

Marcus D. Gregio’s book was published eight years ago and still stands as the only catalogue of Shakespeare festivals (a tellingly indication of how this area of Shakespeare’s studies has not yet been extensively investigated). It includes a set of essays by directors, professors, actors and designers that help introduce some aspects of theatrical approaches to Shakespeare in the 21st century. It works as a catalogue, with descriptions submitted by several major companies doing Shakespeare today. With his amusing and critical style, Gregio offers an overview of the sheer number of Shakespeare dedicated companies and festivals from Canada to Japan to Australia.

Although very respectful and admiring of the quality of Shakespeare’s works, Gregio also criticises ‘bardolatry’ and the cult around the poet, for it eventually turns Shakespeare into elite material and excludes people. On this note, Gregio consciously or not, reveals an attitude that seems to permeate one of the characteristic ideals behind theatre festivals, accessibility and affordability: “Theatre
should be for all and therefore must be accessible to all.” He continues, quoting Joseph Papp, the founder of *Shakespeare in Central Park* sharing his belief of an absolute need to “attract an audience that represent[s] all groups, regardless of their ability to pay – and even those that could pay…” (20-1).

From the seven essays in the book, it seems clear that the profusion of Shakespearean productions is linked to commercial and practical reasons, mixed with love for his poetry and with admiration for the endless possibilities his plays offer to actors, directors and designers alike. Therefore, the everlasting nature often attributed to Shakespeare’s universality and genius seems here to be transferred to the continuing and dedicated work of companies that choose, for different reasons, to commit themselves to his plays.

The first reason is that putting on Shakespeare can be quite cheap for a company. For one, Shakespeare does not demand royalties – in the words of Garry Durrant, “that is the one great thing about Shakespeare. He belongs to the world, not an estate. How apt that the greatest set of plays ever written [is] royalty free” (in Gregio 28): a very convenient marriage of high quality, reputation and low cost. Then, as a typical Elizabethan play, it does not demand a lot of props and stage production. An old Volkswagen is all you may need. Expressive examples are Grupo Galpão’s *Romeo and Juliet* (1992), extensively discussed in chapter 3, and Australian Shakespeare Company’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Behind the Scenes* (2011), which produce fantastic visuals, in an old car (see pictures in Appendix 2) or a nearly bare stage. Inexpensive from the outset and exceptionally prestigious as a name, Shakespeare is probably the most suitable playwright of choice, especially to small-scale companies.

Financial reasons also seem to explain partly the abundance of outdoor Shakespeare, as often companies cannot afford to pay the costs of an indoor venue. The Australian John Bell, founder of the *Bell Shakespeare Company*, today regarded as nearly royalty in the realm of Shakespearean actors and directors, started his company with a touring circus tent for lack of funds and for a desire for the unconventional. The company celebrated in 2010 its 20th anniversary and enjoys great prestige at home and internationally.

But cost is not all that matters. Companies may also choose to do Shakespeare for blind faith or unquestioned acceptance in his status and works. However, it is mainly because of “the plays’ richness and, with all the acting and
performance methods and styles now at hand, the almost-limitless possibilities for an actor. Shakespeare engages actors more than any other playwright” (Durrant in Gregio 29). Along those lines, the designer Arthur Oliver explains that one of the main factors for Shakespeare’s prominence is that his works offer unparalleled opportunities for a wider range of time, place and character settings, holding “infinite aesthetic possibility” (in Gregio 41). Oliver also explains that Shakespeare’s text, comparing to modern works, are much more easily translated into any period or even non-period, which is why it is not difficult to find a Taming of the Shrew set in contemporary Northern Australia as well as an Elizabethan King Lear in the USA. Also in accordance, Jonathan Joy, actor, writer and director, stated: “If there is one thing I have learned from my experience above all else, it is this: Shakespeare works anywhere” (in Gregio 35).

Using the descriptions catalogued in Gregio’s book as a starting point, I shall then move on to the characteristics that seem to prevail over our way of making Shakespeare festivals today.

2.4. Shakespeare Festivals and their features

Understandably, the United Kingdom is by far the country that produces the most Shakespeare, especially in the case of amateur performances. Then, perhaps in a movement to revert the ‘elitisation’ of Shakespeare in America 43, diagnosed by Lawrence Levine in Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America (1988), the United States of America come second, followed by Canada and Australia. These positions make sense considering their historical background, official language and cultural inheritance. It is also a question of being among the richest countries in the world, where cultural practices in general are fostered by the State and made possible through official and private funding. Sadly, and probably because of their inferior position in today’s economic and political scenario, Gregio’s ‘catalogue’ does not include any account of festivals in Central and South America, Africa, India and other countries, even though many of them are English speaking ones. It includes a lot more of American festivals and companies, in detriment of some important and numerous ones found in Europe (especially in the UK) and elsewhere. New research in this domain would have to include the countries previously left out and would, as a result, certainly find more revealing.

43 See chapter 1 footnote 24.
characteristics, shedding brighter light on the reappropriation of Shakespeare by popular culture. As far as I am concerned, in chapter 3, I have deliberately chosen to analyse a production that comes from the margin, not the centre of the festivals more widely recognised.

Despite these flaws, after having put most festivals and companies from Gregio’s catalogue on a table (see Appendix 3), certain patterns appear as rather strikingly clear. These institutions range from the largest theatre organisation in the world whose patron is Her Majesty the Queen (Royal Shakespeare Company - UK) to primarily volunteer-based companies that assemble once a year for free summer performances (Shady Shakespeare Company - USA). In spite of their differences, in their vast majority, they share important common features.

2.4.1. Summer holidays and Festivals

One of the first seemingly obvious questions raised by that chart is why is there such concentration of festivals in summer? Why are they so intimately connected with the cycle of seasons? Perhaps today, in a disenchanted post-industrial society, the sole reason for that may be related to weather conditions and to free time since summer is usually a long time off work or school. But historically, festivities have always been linked with the cyclical change of the seasons.

According to François Laroque, with the church taking over the rites of agricultural fertility from pagan times, many of its religious festivals remained linked with those seasonal rituals. Especially in the countryside, at the end of the Middle Ages, folkloric festivals and religious ones coexisted fairly in harmony. They were linked to nature and consequently to supernatural beings and magic – fairies, for instance. Folk customs believed that specific dates in the calendar were favoured by fairies to show themselves. Laroque explains that it is not mere coincidence that the dates of the key festivals of the year (on the ‘doorstep’ of the winter or summer halves) correspond to the times when it was believed that the supernatural was unleashed:

They testify to the survival of the animist beliefs of the pre-Christian era, beliefs that would periodically surface on dates which coincided with those of the old Celtic festivals. Festivals had the effect of triggering the collective memory. Magical beliefs that had lain dormant for most of the year were suddenly reawakened and came back to life for the duration of the festival. (26)
Of course to take a leap from that context to ours is unadvisable, since there are nuances between the word ‘festival’ at the time and today, and since the social, economic and cultural circumstances are very different. But it is interesting to ponder on the possible unconsciously inherited notions and feelings regarding festivities. Laroque affirms that “different religions and cultures share a common tendency to anchor the religious, festive and civic year in the cycles of nature, whether lunar, solar or simply seasonal” (80). Thus, there is a possibility that there is more to these seasonal festivals than we might see at surface level.

2.4.2. Outdoor performances

Likewise, we may explain superficially the current popularity of outdoor productions on the basis of abundance of space, or because people find it is pleasurable to have the opportunity to spend time outside when the majority of us today spend most of our time working in offices and enclosed areas. It is often the case of an economic reason, as I have previously mentioned, since small companies would have to spend more to secure an indoor venue.

There is also the beauty that a natural space can offer to a production, unmatched to any indoor venue – as the co-artistic director for Shakespeare in the Rough highlighted in Gregio’s catalogue: “the company [...] uses the background surroundings to create exciting images and scenes impossible to present in a traditional theatre space” (85). Similarly, the note submitted by The Cleveland Shakespeare Festival affirms that it is by performing plays “free of charge, in a festive, outdoor setting where audiences and actors share the natural lighting of summer evenings” (119) that they can encourage community through theatre. Another artistic director (Zoe Saba, of Central Coast Shakespeare Festival) declared that from her experience, “Shakespeare just seems to go better outdoors. The whole time we were performing indoors, our audiences asked us when we were moving back outside” (89).

But the attraction of outdoor theatre may also have to do with a dormant or perhaps powerful desire on the part of the audience to reconnect with nature. And there is a history behind the outdoor nature of celebrations that may have, to some extent, shaped our reasoning.

In the 17th century, the influence of Puritanism managed to reduce festivities, for they advocated that Satan reigned during those occasions. Laroque explains that their reasoning was, in part, understandable, because “festivals did encourage a
periodic return of old pagan beliefs, reactivated in the rites, games and ceremonies of folklore that were prompted by every celebration in the calendar” (29).

The decline of festival practices, had as a consequence a feeling of nostalgia for the joyful past, full of magic and supernatural beings; a feeling present as early as in the 1600s, as can be found in contemporary accounts: “There was never a merry world since the Fairies left Dancing, and the Parson left Conjuring” (John Selden, 1689, cited in Laroque 24). A regret for what had been lost in those celebrations and a longing for the ‘Golden Age’, a ‘Merrie England’, had already begun to take shape in the Jacobean period (1567-1625).

Laroque draws attention to the fact that in the collective memory, the period when people still believed in fairies was associated with the merry festivals of the old days (especially under Queen Elizabeth). Since fairies and witches (the supernatural in general) are strongly connected with nature, the forest, the outdoors and festive times, all these elements converged to a desire for the return to an organic way of life, connected with the land, away from our disenchanted industrial world. This yearning for a revisit of the pagan love for nature, and creatures of the forest, of the supernatural world, may also explain why throughout the centuries there has always been a constant (though fluctuating) fascination with fantasy. It has been present as a major theme in literature from Antiquity to the 21st century, from The Odyssey, to Beowulf, to A Midsummer Night’s Dream, to the profound Romantic interest in the supernatural, to The Lord of the Rings, and the new wave of best-sellers full of wizards, vampires, zombies, etc.

Another important factor to consider in the popularity of outdoor productions of Shakespeare is the influence of amateur theatre, as discussed by Michael Dobson in Shakespeare and the Amateur Performance (2011). Dobson states that outdoor theatre has been almost entirely associated with Shakespeare productions. They have come to the point of being nearly synonymous. What is interesting about his book is that he puts forward the idea that amateur theatre is the one responsible for leading the way in the outdoor Shakespeare trend in the UK.

From Garrick to the end of the 19th century, amateur outdoor Shakespeare was an attractive way for the aristocracy to stage “their own status as hosts, cultural patrons and social benefactors at the same time as showing off their own grounds”, explains Dobson (164). It was also supported by an elitist desire to perform the classics, as Greek tragedy was cultivated in private schools and universities. Ancient
theatre, in its essence, is open-air, and along with Shakespeare they became the dominant forms in amateur outdoor theatre. Oxford University Drama Society was founded on the principles that it would only be allowed to produce classical drama or Shakespeare (Dobson 166) – it is an example of one of the ways in which they were associated with each other and with outdoor performance.

However, in the 20th century, not only the privately educated were going to acquire the habit of sitting outside to watch Shakespeare or Greek drama. A new form arose in the 1900s, committed to “the participation of all classes in the national culture…profoundly engaged with Shakespeare as both a symbol and an expression of that culture” (Dobson 167), which contributed significantly to the popularization of outdoor performance: the historical pageant. These pageants included outdoor processions, music, poetry and drama performance that staged important historical events of the area, thus celebrating the community, their local identity, their social body.

They attracted not only the local people, but with increasing press coverage, they began to catch the public imagination and draw tourists coming from as far away as America. More importantly, these events were deeply committed to the participation of the community as a whole. It was drama for the people, by the people. It was founded on “the reanimation of the local past, on the very spot where it had happened, through collective amateur spectacle” (170). These communal outdoor festivities, the people’s land, past and identity were thus tied in a cultural knot.

Now, how are the pageants connected to Shakespeare and how did they contribute to the popularization of outdoor Shakespeare performance? According to Dobson’s account, these shows were framed in pseudo-Shakespearean blank verse and borrowed whole sections directly from his plays; or, at least, evoked his time. Interestingly enough, we see once again how Elizabethan England coincides in the collective imagination with a festival Golden Age: the majority of these pageants included the appearance of Queen Bess and most of them did not include any historical events after her reign. It seems that the producers of these pageants felt “that after the Elizabethan era all of English history was banal and unpicturesque, unfit to be shown in a pageant, or that all questions of national and local identity were settled forever by the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588” (171). These
events managed then to accustom large numbers of people all around England to sit outdoors and watch their fellows act in historical costumes.

Then, almost as a reincarnation of David Garrick, there appeared Sir Philip Barling Ben Greet (1857-1936), the most important populariser of outdoor Shakespeare in the 20th century, according to Dobson. Drawing from ideals of classicism (the open-air Greek theatre, for instance) and Elizabethanism (in search for ‘authentic’ Shakespeare), Ben Greet believed that “acting Shakespeare outside [provided] direct access to the one true original method” (174). In 1932, his company officially inaugurated the open-air theatre at Regent’s Park, and today, the Open Air Theatre is one of the most popular theatre events in London during summer, with over 140,000 people attending each year.

Thereupon, Shakespeare outdoors seemed like a healthier alternative to the commercial and urban West End full of what was considered as debasement and vulgarity. The practice of casting children to play fairies in his plays and the bowdlerisation of the scripts, suggest that Greet “deliberately offered Shakespeare as educational, morally safe family entertainment [..] convening] an enormous and hitherto untapped middlebrow audience for live Shakespeare which has continued to support open-air performances ever since” (176). Greet also influenced theatre generations after him through the publishing of his annotated acting texts, with acting, stage, posture, and pronunciation advice.

At the same time, in 1932, the Minack Theatre opened in Cornwall putting on The Tempest with a real sea, often real tempests and once, even a real shipwreck. It is an open-air theatre founded by the designer Dorothy Rowena Cade (1893-1983), built on a ‘sloping gully of gorse and heather and below that, the sea of the Atlantic Ocean’ (see Appendix 4). Dobson affirms emphatically that “[d]espite its perils and inconveniences, or perhaps because of them, Minack remains one of the most arresting of all modern Shakespearean theatres” (183). Like in the private amateur performances of the 19th century and at Regent’s Park, productions at Minack combined the Greek and Elizabethan simplicity with naturalism, all provided by its essential outdoor nature; or as Dobson puts it: “as a direct heir of [...] Ben Greet, [Minack is] a stage where classicism and Elizabethan antiquarianism could be reconciled with naturalism, a suitable venue for hyper-real Tempests” (187).  

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44 For Greet’s complete biography, see Oxford DNB.  
45 Description according to the theatre’s website: www.minack.com
It is, however, intriguing that despite the infamous weather in the UK, which would intuitively never allow momentum for outdoor theatre, the practice has only increased in the last decades. Dobson affirms that in summer, it is “practically impossible to be more than twenty miles from an open-air Shakespearean venue in mainland Britain [...]” (155). It is likely that the total number of outdoor Shakespeare productions exceeds the number of indoor ones in the country today.

The answer to the enigma lies on a complex formula. Outdoor Shakespeare combine, in a collective cultural rite, ideals of a national poet, a national landscape and a national festive past to be celebrated live, as a community, in person and kinaesthetically. It has

less to do with what outdoor performance in such locations does aesthetically for the plays than what the plays do ideologically for the locations. Like Edwardian pageants, open-air productions of Shakespeare integrate specific places within a nostalgic vision of the nation, its history and its culture. (187)

Once again, we find this ideal of recovering a lost ‘Merrie England’ through Shakespeare and the English land, in celebration of an authentic native culture as glorious as the classics.

2.4.3. Festivals and comedies

The same look back over past principles of festivity may perhaps also be applied to the question of why festivals prefer comedies over tragedies. In agreement (though not unconditional) with C. L. Barber’s study on Shakespeare’s comedies and the theme of festivity, François Laroque consents that “it is comedy that most frequently uses the theme or pretext of festivity, playing upon all its registers ranging from the simple entertainment through more boisterous forms of merrymaking, to satire, the burlesque and the grotesque” (196). It seems natural that plays embedded in the theme of festivity should be more commonly presented in festivals. Festivities were deeply linked to laughter and mockery, the strongest points in comedies.

In addition, if we associate festivals with popular culture, then it may be worthy to note that back on the Elizabethan stage, it was a comic figure, the clown (or the similar categories: the joker, the jester, the fool) who stood as one of the main representatives of popular culture. According to Laroque, various writers considered tragedy as a noble, high art, and mixing that with the frolics of clowns or other

‘popular’ or ‘vulgar’ figures seemed inappropriate (35). Therefore, comedies would be closer to what the masses like, if we follow this prerogative, and that kind of audience is the one desired for festivals. For instance, from the table in Appendix 3, we can see that especially in the USA, a good number of Shakespeare festivals are for free or ask for donations as the entry fee. And in the majority of the paid options, companies endeavour to make a point in charging very low prices. In Marcus D. Gregio’s book, we find that often companies emphasise their mission to attract spectators from all sorts of backgrounds, circumstances and walks of life, as a democratic experience.

2.4.4. Shakespeare, education and festivals

Another common characteristic of the festivals and companies included in the table is that nearly all of them offer educational programmes for students and/or actors. It can certainly represent an extra income, for the rest of the year, off season, especially in the case of companies who put on productions only one season per year. But what is more important is that these workshops, school tours and the like are some of the main reasons for the lasting popularity and fame of Shakespeare. It is part of most companies’ mission statements to ‘entertain and educate’.

Thousands of students are now introduced to Shakespeare through workshops and live performances which bring an interactive and fun relationship with his texts, very different from the generally intimidating and isolating classroom experience in which they do close-readings of what seems to be an undecipherable text in a strange language that resembles English. When high-school-aged students get up from a Hamlet matinee saying “That was pretty good. I’d come see it again” (Gregio 46), despite the little eloquence, it is high praise especially comparing to the statement made by Jonathan Joy: “If I had a dime for every time that somebody told me that s/he does not like Shakespeare, I would not have to sell programme advertisements to make ends meet” (32). Joy goes on saying that all the responses ‘I don’t get it’ or ‘It’s too hard’ always come from people who have never seen a live performance of Shakespeare.

The discussions, shows, and buzz aroused by those programmes are partly what guarantee that Shakespeare’s works live on, from one generation to another, especially because they tend to seek to demystify his language, make it relevant and accessible to all. That is, incidentally, one of the main concerns of most companies. Throughout Gregio’s book, it is easy to see an underlying concern to affirm a
company’s commitment to making Shakespeare accessible. A brief scanning over the semantic field of those texts submitted by the companies to Gregio’s catalogue can reveal some of these central concerns.

Thus, we find that their primary consideration is to open access to the text. Words such as ‘accessible’, ‘comprehensible’, ‘understandable’, and ‘clarity’ are found all over the descriptions submitted by companies (nineteen times), regardless of their country, size or style. The Bell Shakespeare Company in Australia, for example, states that their goal is to provide “uninhibited access to the great classics” (73 my italics). And as if to reassure that ‘accessible’ does not mean ‘debased’, those words were often immediately followed by a guarantee that it is still ‘high-quality’ theatre (five times).

It seems there is a need to couple those ideals together and to make sure that people do not feel scared to face Shakespeare, which denotes, then, a general idea that his text is difficult, daunting and incomprehensible. Companies want to assure their audience that once they experience his text as a live performance, they will understand and enjoy it, even if it is their first time. We find submissions stating emphatically that they include and engage “new and established theatre audiences” (74), or “the Shakespeare novice and the experienced theatregoer” (85), or even “the young and the old” (99 all my italics). Perhaps that is their contribution to the demystification and popularization of Shakespeare, to the deconstruction of the idea that one must be ‘initiated’ to take pleasure in and benefit from his plays.

Paradoxically, their concern to educate the audience (as if initiation were in fact necessary) is made clear with the sheer number of educational programmes available from nearly all festivals and companies. They state that one of their main aims is to “cultivate an audience for the future” (115), to highlight “learning, appreciation and celebration” (99), to “allow the plays to act as education, cultural initiation, and contemporary entertainment” (119). As it is apparent from these quotations, while their intention is to educate, they also simply want to entertain. This two-fold expression (‘educate and entertain’) and its variants come up in the submitted texts at least five times. To accomplish this double dose, it seems necessary to make the text relevant and contemporary (the words are repeated six times), being their mission “to keep in touch with Shakespeare as a contemporary, and also to keep modern audiences, artists, and writers in touch with Shakespeare” (80).
Regarding audiences, companies involved in Shakespeare festivals proclaim to seek to reach ‘as many as possible’, a ‘diverse audience’, ‘from all walks of life’ – these expressions appear no less than nine times. *Shakespeare by the Sea*, in California, for instance, states that their mission is to bring theatre to “underserved, culturally diverse audiences in order to ignite imagination, promote literacy, and encourage artistic expression” (95). That explains the free or small entrance fee so often the case in these festive events: their need and desire to make it affordable, reachable. In the words of *Woman’s Will*, also from California, these festivals strive for “triple accessibility...: all people must be able to reach our events, afford our events, and relate to our events” (99 my italics).

Gregio himself had noted all these core similarities in Shakespeare festivals, though he did not develop a discussion on them, as the companies’ submitted descriptions that
talk about being free and being simple, they talk about reaching out to their community so that all lives can be enhanced by the experience of live theatre; that results in accessibility and creates a need. If our work is not accessible, if we are not creating living theatre, there is no use in producing it. (163)

Certainly, these hints on characteristics and styles shared by festivals today as well as their relationship with ideas of festivities in the past call for further research, focused on a history of festivals and Shakespeare.

### 2.5. An idyllic fraternization

Festivals held outdoors have a strong sense of shared experience, of communal activities and coming together as equals, since, in general, there are no numbered seats or privileged spaces for the richer or higher classes. Everybody is encouraged by festival producers to come with their chairs, tablecloths, blankets, picnics and families to eat, drink and be merry, all together, spread on the lawns or gardens. This reality of a festival today echoes a similar idea of an idyllic fraternization of the 16th century, described as followed:

At this entertainment all are, in the modern revolutionary idea of the word, perfectly equal. Here is no distinction of persons, but master and servant sit at the same table, converse freely together, and spend the remainder of the night in dancing, singing, etc., in the most easy familiarity. (Brand and Ellis, *Popular Antiquities*, 1849, quoted in Laroque 159)

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47 See table in Appendix 3.
Outdoor performances in Elizabethan costuming that seek to include otherwise under-represented middle and lower class audiences respond to nostalgic feelings for an innocent pre-industrial time, of a Golden Age of continuity and communal culture.

With this in mind one can have an impression that indoor theatres, with prohibitive prices and unusual or avant-garde staging are seen as elitist, while outdoor theatre involves traditional staging, historical dress and makes sure to include the widest and largest audience possible, explaining its popular appeal.

The companies’ mission to entertain and educate contributes immensely to the lasting popularity of Shakespeare, it ensures that his legacy lives on, enduring time, economic and social changes and technology. Together with the communal ideal of festivals, the everlasting nature often attributed to Shakespeare’s universality and genius seems here to be transferred to the continuing and dedicated work of companies that choose, for different reasons, to commit themselves to his plays.

To explore more closely the possibilities of Shakespeare popularisation today, through outdoor practices focused on audience participation and a carnivalesque attitude, we shall now delve into the case of a Brazilian appropriation of *Romeo and Juliet* by Grupo Galpão.
CHAPTER 3 - Romeu e Julieta: A case study

3.1. Cultural identity in Brazil

The discussion of cultural manifestations and national identity aspirations in Brazil must be set in the context of an identity crisis that stems from the beginning of its history as a colonized country, in a colonized continent, the New World, “discovered” (or in more accurate terms, invaded) by European imperialist countries. Understanding the anxiety enveloped in Brazilian perspectives of cultural identity is important to frame a discussion of the production of Shakespeare’s plays in Brazil.

Portuguese ships, led by Pedro Alvares Cabral (c.1467 – c.1520), arrived in Brazil on 22 April 1500. Only four days later, a Catholic mass was held in the new land. Like most colonised countries, there was an absolute disregard by the invaders for the indigenous peoples who already lived there, who had been established for centuries and had their own and rich set of beliefs, customs, rituals, language - in short, their own culture. In the first two centuries of occupation, at least half of the indigenous people were already decimated by diseases introduced by the colonizer or in conflicts with them.48 The rest was exploited, humiliated, acculturated, assimilated, or eventually isolated in delimited reserves. It is estimated that at the time of the Portuguese arrival there were between one and five million indigenes; today the numbers vary between 330,000 and 200,000.49 The Portuguese established themselves in Brazil and over the next centuries, along with other strong foreign influences (such as the French between 1555 and 1567, 1612 and 1615, the Dutch in 1624-1640, the English in the 18th century, the Italians, Germans, Polish, Japanese and others after the World Wars, the American cultural colonization in the 20th century and the inevitable process of globalization in the 21st century), the Brazilian population and its culture have been built up of a vast patchwork of elements, local and foreign.

Therefore, the question of a national identity in Brazil must be seen in the light of the unavoidable influence of a foreign tradition. The anxiety generated by the instinct to assert one self’s cultural identity under a smothering umbrella of an

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48 For further information on the subject, see the Internet web site: http://www.portalsaofrancisco.com.br/alfa/indios-brasileiros/populacao-indigena.php.
outside canon has been dealt with in different ways through different aesthetic movements: romanticism, realism and modernism. As pointed out by Maria Clara Versiani Galery, these movements ironically derive from their European equivalents (46). Romanticism, beginning in the 1830s, created a heroic image of the indigene, sacralising a natural past and sometimes exalting the mix between the native and the European elements, encouraging love for the land and pride for the Brazilian ascendency. During the Realist Movement (towards the end of 19th century), the tone in discussions of national identity was pessimistic and often revolved around questions of race and cultural assimilation. However, the modernist project in the 20th century, a very political one, conceived the idea of Brazilian identity dessacralizing it and refusing to see the country through Europeans lenses.50 We will focus in detail on Brazilian modernism later in this chapter.

Among cultural manifestations in the country, drama followed an interesting route from idealization to appropriation51 throughout the artistic history of Brazil. Evidently, the origins of theatre as we know it in the Western modus operandi are defined by European influence. With the moving of the Portuguese court to Brazil in 1808, seeking exile from the Napoleonic Wars, cultural life blossomed in the country, albeit as a consolidation of the importation of cultural material. The colony newly turned into metropolis saw its status change from being a mere land of exploitation to the new world where Portuguese life was to be permanently transferred and established in the tropics. At the time, the Brazilian elite sought an imitation of European life, and was not in the least concerned with the idea of building notions of Brazilian identity (Barbara Heliodora in Galery 49)52.

Despite its self-proclaimed political independence53 by the prince regent, D. Pedro de Alcântara, officially commemorated as 7 September 1822, European influence did not yield. In 1873, for instance, Machado de Assis (1839-1908), the first great Brazilian writer and a very critical commentator of Brazilian society, wrote

50 For more on national identity and literary movements in Brazil, see Baldo, A identidade nacional: matizes românticos no projeto modernista (2001).
51 I am using the word “appropriation” as defined by Aimara da Cunha Resende, in Brazilian Readings of Shakespeare: “An appropriation takes hold of the source text for one’s ideological purpose [...] making it one’s own and transforming it, practically, into another text, not only with minor changes, but thoroughly dressed in new clothes, made up so as to plunge the audience into another universe, full of implications regarding contemporary life and world” (30).
52 For more on drama and cultural life in Brazil at the time, see Galery 2.2.
about the Brazilian theatre: “Não há atualmente teatro brasileiro, nenhuma peça nacional se escreve, raríssima peça nacional se representa.”  

For a long time, imitation, assimilation and mediation proved unavoidable in the formation of culture of the New World at large. Resende explains: “There was no way out. Either the native population agreed to import foreign models or they would remain as curiosities not worth consideration by those controlling political and intellectual life” (12). Well into the 19th century, then, the Brazilian elite tried to copy European elite, dressing up to go to the theatre, and talking about it at exclusive parties, obviously at the cost of the welfare of most of the population in the country. Resende stated: “Not Brazilian culture, but culture in Brazil was entirely based on European standards” (13). There were exceptions, of course, such as Machado de Assis parodying one of Shakespeare’s plays (namely Othello) in Don Casmurro (1899), a carnivalistic subversion of the canon in an essentially Brazilian novel. But most of the time, Brazilian society was “full of prejudices, materialistic, not sure of its own values, but ostentatiously [and passively] supported by alien cultures and productions” (15).

In the 20th century, however, the Modernist movement (kicking off in 1922 in São Paulo with the Modern Art Week) brought about an artistic alternative to preserve a sense of national identity against foreign influence. It was developed by different generations and phases, but one of its central pieces is the Manifesto Antropófago, (anthropophagous manifesto) written by Oswald de Andrade in 1928.

The movement was focused on nationalist ideals, a return to the origins, an appreciation of indigenous heritage and the language spoken by the people, among other claims, especially in its first generation (1922-1930). The main idea was to practice symbolic anthropophagy of foreign tradition, to begin building a genuine Brazilian cultural identity based on radical appropriation (deglutition) of those

54 “There is not, at the moment, a Brazilian theatre; no national drama is written and a national play is rarely staged.” Instinto de Nacionalidade 9.

55 Shakespeare was introduced and known in Brazil for a long time through poor translations derived from poorly translated texts in French, the most famous of all being the highly criticised Ducis’s texts. For the history of Jean-François Ducis’s translations and other Shakespeare’s translations used in Brazil and in Europe, see Galery, pp.25-35.

56 For more on the development of cultural identity in Brazil and the history of Shakespeare in the country, including popular appropriations, see Resende, Brazilian Readings of Shakespeare, p.11-41; Martins (org.), Novas Leituras, novas identidades, p.7-12; Gomes, Shakespeare no Brasil; Santos (org.), Latin-American Shakespeares, pp.11-20, 25-34, 263-289.

57 Meaning here, not another language, but the popular speech, found in the streets, with slangs, mistakes, deviations from the norm, etc.
elements to be digested with local elements and produce manifestations that could truly represent the country’s mixed heritage.

3.2. Modernism and the Manifesto Antropófago

Oswald de Andrade’s position with his manifestos called for an awareness of the irreversible situation, the presence of the foreign blood in us, the unquestionable reality of the European mind that has grown among our intelligentsia and given rise to works of art now extant and established within the ranks of our artistic and intellectual tradition. Therefore, what has to be done is to devour the foreigner and then digest its parts, making the old non-native element become one with the really national, the regional, the autochthonous, giving birth to a half-breed that will ostensibly show his marks of Brazilianity. (Resende 16-17)

We shall, then, delve into the Manifesto Antropófago now to see Andrade’s ideas in detail. Written for the first issue of the Revista de Antropofagia (Anthropophagy Magazine), the Manifesto was a short text in telegraphic style calling for a cultural revolution (“Queremos a Revolução Caraíba”) based on nationalist ideals. However, those ideals did not involve an affirmation of Brazilian culture through a denial of foreign influences, a naïve exaltation of nature and the natives or Darwinian theories of racial superiority, much on the contrary. The Manifesto acknowledges and welcomes the interference of the other (“Só me interessa o que não é meu”), but not in an unconscious, uncritical, submissive way (“Contra todos os importadores de consciência enlatada”); it is rather against the traditional imitation of European standards by the elite (“Contra as elites vegetais”) and for the disturbance of order and establishment through carnival (“Nunca fomos catequizados. Fizemos foi o Carnaval”).

Before the Manifesto Antropófago, he had already written another nationalist piece called Manifesto da Poesia-Pau Brasil, in 1924.

“We want the Caraíba Revolution.” – Caraíba is a word that designates both one of the indigenous tribes whom the Portuguese met upon arrival in Brazil and a linguistic indigenous group.

“I’m only interested in what is not mine.” – It’s worth noticing that Andrade chooses to use a more colloquial register, which I tried to translate here.

“Against all the importers of canned awareness.”

“Against the vegetal elites” – Andrade is referring to the lifeless, static intellectual Brazilian elite that did not move towards change, but simply copied European patterns, instead of fostering a sense of ‘brazilianity’.

“We were never catechized. What we did was Carnival.” According to the notions of carnival by Bakhtin and Laroque, carnival is then understood as the moment and festivities in which the world is turned upside down, hierarchical settings are upset and established order dismantled. Here it follows a mention to the Catholic religion imposition in the country by the Portuguese. It is especially meaningful as carnival is considered a profane practice. See chapter 2.
Oswald de Andrade refers to colonialist and expansionist enterprises in general, citing the first European overseas expeditions and emperors (“Contra as histórias do homem que começam no Cabo Finisterre…Sem Napoleão. Sem César”), as the cause of unhappiness for the colonized people (“Antes dos portugueses descobrirem o Brasil, o Brasil tinha descoberto a felicidade”). The colonization having happened, now the alternative is to courageously ‘eat’ and ‘digest’ the imposed culture for their own benefit: “[o que veio] Foram fugitivos de uma civilização que estamos comendo, porque somos fortes e vingativos como o Jabuti.” Here, Andrade firstly brings up a view of the Portuguese as cowards, referring to the moment when the court ran away to Brazil (1808) and established themselves in the colony during the Napoleonic Wars. Then, using again indigenous references, Andrade speaks of Brazilians like him who are ‘eating’ the colonizer influence, with the same perseverance and strength as the Jabuti, a reptile of the same family as turtles, which represents these qualities in indigenous religions.

He continues exhorting Brazilians for the absorption of the sacred enemy (“Absorção do inimigo sacro.”) to transform it into totem (“Para transformá-lo em totem.”) – a ‘totem’ is defined by the OED as an indigenous word for a hereditary mark, emblem or badge, with symbols after which an indigenous tribe is named. Considering the history of Brazil as defined by the arrival of the Portuguese, Andrade’s idea seems to be to accept this heritage; but as he uses an indigenous rather than a European reference (the totem), his acceptance is active, appropriating and mixing the foreign legacy with native practices. Only through the active digestion and incorporation of their mixed inheritance, will they truly become culturally independent (“A nossa independência ainda não foi proclamada.”).

Andrade began his manifesto with an example of culture anthropophagy, and a telling one for the purposes of this present research: “Tupi, or not Tupi, that is the question.” It is written in English (Andrade includes other words and expressions also in French and in Latin) and it was certainly an obvious Shakespearean reference to the public to which the Manifesto was addressed: the Brazilian intelligentsia, the
educated elite. *Tupi* refers to one of the most important groups of indigenous Brazilian tribes, to a branch of indigenous languages in the country and to an individual belonging to the *Tupi* group. The wordplay is apparent and the question that emerges is: to be a *Tupi* or not to be a *Tupi*? How?

One of the most famous literary quotations in history, as part of Hamlet’s monologue about the human condition, Andrade’s hybrid expression denotes his questioning about who they are, what they are there for, where and how they are going to evolve, as a nation full of questions and uncertainties, confused about its history, its tradition, its identity. His manifesto is an attempt to answer to this crisis, to offer an alternative to passive assimilation or simply mediation of foreign cultural canon.

The choice for an English quotation, instead of a Portuguese one, which would be more straightforward according to the country’s history, may be explained by Andrade’s intention to show how they had been affected not only by Portuguese cultural imposition, but others as well, such as English and French influence. It could also be for a desire of a more universally recognizable symbol of European culture, since Portuguese literature in general is not as internationally and widely known as William Shakespeare. Today, nearly nothing is actually as internationally and widely known as William Shakespeare.

### 3.3. Shakespeare in Brazil

Shakespeare’s introduction and development in Brazil, unsurprisingly, happened through foreign influence. At the beginning of the 19th century, Shakespeare was introduced in Brazil in an indirect way, through adaptations based on French versions, which in their turn came from translated editions of the English text. The earliest known performance is an adaptation of Jean François Ducis’ translation of *Romeo and Juliet* in 1835 (Gomes 13). With French translations brought by Portuguese theatre companies, and Italian companies (between 1871-1900, eight companies visited Brazil with Shakespeare plays in their repertoire. Gomes 21) fighting among themselves for popularity in the country, it was only in 1886 that a Brazilian made translation from the original in English was performed.

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69 In Brazil, most cultural, social and political movements are lead by a learned minority, since access to education used to be (and it still partially is) a privilege of the more fortunate ones.

70 For more on the history of *Tupi*, see Alves Jr, Osias. *Uma breve história da língua tupi, a língua do tempo que o Brasil era canibal* (2006).
even if by a Portuguese company (22). Only in 1938 did a fully native theatrical company present a Shakespeare play in the country (23-4). Paradoxically, as early as in 1867, a conference by a university literary club took place discussing the theme: “What is the influence of Shakespeare in modern theatre?” (39).

Finally, in the 20th century, Brazilian artists began to make Shakespeare relevant to Brazilian contexts: “This reversed attitude moves from initial hints at the Shakespearean canon, through quotations used to reinforce themes, to subversive appropriations, intertextual counterpoints, ambivalent ‘Shakespeares’” (Resende 17). An example is Caliban, in 1971, dealing with the issues at the heart of national identity discussions, such as the miscegenation brought about by colonization and possible reactions against colonial oppression. “Transformed, transfused, the ‘Bard’ looks and sounds Brazilian” (17). At the same time, despite the political agitations during the military dictatorship of the sixties and seventies, Resende laments that the unlearned mass (here not relating to mass culture, but rather to the poor share of Brazilian population, a majority with very little education) were probably not able to read between the lines and be concerned about national identity questions, or even attend theatre performances, when their own daily survival was a more urgent matter.

It was television that brought Shakespeare really close to the common people in the country. For the first time, in 1980, with Romeu e Julieta, and Otelo de Oliveira, in 1983, Shakespeare appeared as popular culture in Brazil in a production by Globo network television. These adaptations were aimed at the “uncultured” audience, which was unfamiliar with theatre. They managed to “highlight some of the themes and issues [...] central to the Shakespearean text and, at the same time, some feeling of recognition was aroused [...] through the conjunction with national peculiarities” (19). Nearly ten years later, Grupo Galpão emerged with their version of Romeo and Juliet, one in which the lovers “live in every Brazilian, because they relive the love affair of the young Renaissance couple, but in Minas Gerais, in the twentieth century” (24).

3.4. Grupo Galpão
Grupo Galpão (meaning, ‘Shed Group’) is a group from Minas Gerais, the third most important state in Brazil, situated in the southeast. Its position, away from the dominance of the traditional cultural centres of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, but still within an area of better artistic opportunities, gives the group a unique personality and stance. It is a company founded upon a commitment to street theatre and circus practice and is deeply rooted in the Brazilian folklore. Ironically, the group’s origins lay on foreign incentives. The young actors of the company met and worked together in a workshop on street theatre directed by the German George Froscher and Kurt Bildstein in 1982, through the Goethe Institut in Brazil.

From that experience emerged a theatre company whose mission was to develop street theatre in Belo Horizonte and offer theatre plays to a large and heterogeneous audience, mostly underserved by cultural initiatives, through works that commented on different aspects of their political and cultural reality. Their aim was to play for the pickpocket in his rags wandering in the streets as well as for the businessman in his suit running to work.

From their first production, in 1982, E a noiva não quer casar, circus techniques and comedy constituted the founding elements of their language, culminating in Romeu e Julieta, ten years later. They chose the public space as their main stage. They were drawn by the spontaneity and unpredictability of the streets where they found a sense of belonging to the folk, disrupting their everyday lives. Therefore, they focused on developing a theatrical language that allowed them to improvise, to establish quickly a rapport with the audience, and to attract and hold the unadvised passerby’s attention. This specific language the group has consolidated involves several elements: music (mostly traditionally Brazilian or regional), magic tricks, clownery, stilts, stunts, pantomime, and other circussy and commedia dell’arte techniques.

The caricatures created in the plays often served as social criticism of society behaviour and its own reactions to those behaviours, fulfilling a political mission to bring awareness and reflexion, as well as entertainment, to people who can rarely

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71 Most commonly translated as “General Mines”. Thus called because of its intense mining activity beginning in the 17th century.
72 Directors of the Freies Theater München (Free Theatre Munich).
73 For more on the history of the group, see Brandão, Grupo Galpão: 15 anos de risco e rito (1999), and Alves and Noe, O Palco e a rua: a trajetória do teatro do Grupo Galpão (2006) and Moreira, Uma história de encontros (2010).
74 The capital city of Minas Gerais.
75 “And the bride doesn’t want to get married.”
experience that kind of cultural expression. “Essa abordagem cênica cria uma atmosfera que facilita euforia, compreensão coletiva e eventualmente auto-análise, mesmo não havendo pretensão de aprofundamento psicológico.”

It is important here to open a parenthesis to explain that in Brazil, even today, access to culture is still far from being universal and democratic. UNESCO has assessed that a minority of the Brazilian population goes to the cinema once a year, more than 70% has never attended a dance performance, the price of books in general are prohibitive for the lower classes’ income, several towns do not have a library (mainly in the Northeast), etc.

Along with the aim to reach the less fortunate majority, the group’s desire to focus on street performance is set within a larger, international cultural context in which they meet a demand to fulfill “…um papel estético específico, resultante de pelo menos uma grande mudança, a [relative] democratização da arte trazida pelas tecnologias da comunicação – o cinema, a tevê e o vídeo.” This role involves the inclusion of the audience as an active element of the show.

As I intend to demonstrate with the analysis of Romeu e Julieta, from the very beginning, the contact with the audience and their close participation was one of their main goals. Their productions often end with the participation of the audience in a large circle, where all dance and sing together and the spectators give their change in the collecting hat that the group always present to gather spontaneous donations (the ‘entrance fee’; since it is a street spectacle, there are no tickets or entrance charge, as well as no obligation of paying anything at all).

The very context of their productions in the streets calls for a different kind of interaction. Acting in parks, squares, public spaces in general, the group rejects the conventional theatre premise of distancing spectators one from another and from the stage in an enclosed building. They appear to disrupt the routine of people, invading the public space and appropriating the grey city scene with their colours, music and circussy aesthetic.

76 “This theatrical approach creates an atmosphere that facilitates euphoria, collective comprehension, and eventually auto-analysis, even if there is no pretension towards psychological deepening” (Alves 35).
77 Available at http://www.unesco.org/new/pt/brasilia/culture/access-to-culture/.
78 “a specific aesthetic role, resulting from at least an important change, the [relative] democratization of art brought about by the communication technologies – the cinema, the TV and the video.” (Alves and Noe 35)
Certainly, the group has produced several plays in conventional theatres for different reasons, but the interaction with the audience is still privileged through acting games that blend the imaginary walls of the stage and the auditorium, at times inviting the audience up on the stage or sending the actors down to the seats, resulting in a confusion of fact and fiction, life and art. Playing in the streets, however, allows them to reach a level of heterogeneity hardly possible inside a theatre. Their improvised sketches create

[...] um teatro democratizado que não se confina ao texto, reiterando sua intenção de focalizar, com sátira e muito espírito, as falhas da sociedade, para subvertê-las. A comédia funciona, então, como terapia, minimizando as defesas intelectuais hipócritas, e o registro coloquial é adotado para facilitar a auto-análise da plateia.80

As an example of the characteristics mentioned in the quotation above, I would like to discuss very briefly the group’s adaptation for street performance, in 1986, of an anonymous play called A comédia da esposa muda.81 The production of the text, created from a canovaccio according to the group’s website, carries in its essence many of the elements that became trademarks of the group.

Firstly, there is a conscious effort to appropriate the foreign influence (Italian, in the case of commedia dell’arte), mixing it with Brazilian culture and resulting in a hybrid product that yet made sense and spoke directly to the typical mineiro.84 That was possible thanks to the introduction, for instance, of live music played by the actors themselves, using popular regional instruments (such as the guitar and the accordion) and colloquial register and local terms, such as the famous “uai!”85

Still, the director Paulinho Polika did not efface the existence of the Italian legacy of the text. In a truly anthropophagous way, the play does not deny foreign

79 As an example, De olhos fechados (“With eyes shut”), 1983, the second production by the group, a play for children about the five senses. Throughout the show, the actors smell, look, lick, listen and touch each other, while encouraging the audience to do the same with their neighbours. For more, see Brandão, Grupo Galpão: 15 anos de risco e rito (1999), chapter 4.
80 “…a democratized theatre that is not confined to the text, reaffirming their intention to focus, with satire and a lot of wit, on society’s flaws, to subvert them. Comedy works, then, as a therapy, minimizing the hypocritical intellectual defenses, and the colloquial register is adopted to facilitate self-analysis by the audience.” (Alves and Noe 37)
81 “…the mute wife’s comedy.” For more on this production, see Brandão, 15 anos chapter 8.
82 “A canovaccio is a vague plot outline used by commedia dell’arte players. It consisted only of a list of acts and scenes; the details were left to the improvisation of the actors.” (Wikipedia)
84 Someone or something originally from the state of Minas Gerais.
85 Interjection pronounced like ‘why’ and probably originated from the contact with the English during their explorations of gold and gem mines in the state during the 18th century.
influence, it acknowledges and appropriates it. It kept Italian locations, references, an
Italian accent and even the song O sole mio, all the while referring to a Brazilian
reality through the scenery and the text. As much as it works as a perfect example of
Oswald de Andrade’s ideals, nowhere had the group acknowledged this influence at
the time, probably unaware of how much their work corresponded to this artistic
attitude, seemingly natural to them. Later, the anthropophagous ideals re-emerged in
full light, when in 2000, as part of the commemorations of the 500th anniversary of
Brazil, one of the branches of the group, ‘Oficinão Galpão’, wrote a history comedy
called Caixa Postal 50086. It focused on the formation of national character through
the country’s history, from the colonization of the jungle to today’s carnival in Rio.
In one of the scenes, a famous bishop is symbolically devoured by indigenes while
they recite excerpts of the Manifesto Antropófago (Alves and Noe 54-5).

In A comédia da esposa muda, we find the company’s intention to comment
on social behaviour, as the text addresses the position of women in society. The play
tells the story of a couple in which the wife is dumb. The husband, eager to hear his
wife’s affectionate words, finds himself with a whining, nagging and questioning
woman (who was very unhappy with her marriage and the brutality of her husband),
one she recovers her voice through surgery. The only way out is the performance of
another ‘surgery’, now on the husband, to turn him deaf and therefore immune to his
wife’s claims and complaints. Through laughter and amusement, the group manages
to touch real issues that may evoke reflection while entertaining an audience that is
perhaps partly not prepared or even aware enough to face and discuss them more
openly.

The production was born from improvised sketches and workshops, exercises
of Pantomime, acrobatics, circus numbers and the typical masks of the commedia
dell’ arte. Brandão explains how even the actors felt more involved and relaxed in
this new and festive universe, being no surprise then, “ter sido sua apresentação uma
apoteose, não só por sua alegria, como também por sua movimentação, sua abertura
cênica, sua comunicação imediata com a plateia e o sentido de jogo teatral
desenvolvido pelos atores.”87

86 “P.O. Box 500.”
87 “[that] this presentation was an apotheosis, not only by its joy, but also for its
movements, its scenic opening, its immediate communication with the audience and a sense
of theatrical game developed by the actors” (15 anos 59).
Also visible in this production is the dilution of ideological lines separating high culture (theatre productions are generally not part of the cultural life of lower and sometimes even middle classes in Brazil) and popular culture. It works as a symbolic event in which art rebels against heavy and dogmatized traditional views, offering truly democratized art to all. As accurately put forward by Alves and Noe, commenting on that comedy:

"Although it may seem backwards in time, in form and content, this version of the popular theatre is actually a symbolic event in which the circus presentations (emphasis on body language) and ordinary words (choice of informal register) rebel against dramatic literary pomp. Another feature that is repeated is the opening of the theatre to all different sorts of spectators, regardless of age, culture, ethnicity or educational and social level" (42).

The production became part of the group repertory for several years, and made Galpão famous in national and international levels. Taking advantage of their increasing notoriety, the company began promoting theatre festivals. Workshops and projects began with the I International Festival of Street Theatre in 1990. Having participated in similar festivals in South America and Europe, the group decided to insert Belo Horizonte in the circuit, striving to bring other companies to the city to exchange theatre practices and ideas. Former victim of the difficulties in gaining recognition themselves, the actors wanted to defend and encourage street theatre, an art form little valued in the country until then. Brandão explains their position:

"The choice to promote a festival exclusively dedicated to street theatre was due precisely to the marginalization to which Galpão itself was submitted early in its career: it was an opportunity to showcase the extremely seriously research being developed in isolated groups scattered throughout the country that, unfortunately, continued to be ignored by the national media, critics and by its own field" (15 anos 79).

Local companies as well as others from Italy, Colombia, Argentina and different states of Brazil attended the festival and it was a tremendous success.
Nevertheless, without state support and private funding initiatives (despite the company’s attempts) the continuation of the FESTIN in 1992 was only assured by the group’s efforts. It was then that one of the most famous theatre productions ever created by a theatre group in the country was presented for the first time: *Romeu e Julieta*. More than 3,000 people were there, a number never seen in that kind of cultural manifestation (see Appendix 2). Theatre associations emerged from those encounters, spreading their work throughout the country.

In 1994, the festival (now called FIT) begins to include productions for the conventional indoor stage, as a condition requested by the City Department of Cultural Affairs and the Francisco Nunes Theatre to offer financial support. With larger resources, the festival increased in scope, reputation and influence. Unfortunately, in a regrettable outcome of the event, the City Department decided to impose a restructuration for the continuation of the festival which dismissed the group from the coordination of the project. As an alternative for their educational and exchange projects, they founded in 1998 a centre for creativity and cultural exchange called Galpão Cine Horto, which also includes activities in music and dance. Today, Galpão is one of the most famous and respected theatre companies, known and admired internationally, not only for its productions, but also for its educational programmes and research incentives.

The popular approach that values Brazilian folklore and circus techniques combined with social concern and audience active participation can be found in most of the company’s productions (outdoors and indoors), but mainly in their work in the 1990s, such as *Foi por amor* (1987), *Corra enquanto é tempo* (1988), *A rua da amargura* (1994), *Um Molière imaginário* (1996), also *Um homem é um homem* (2005), and, the object of my next topic, *Romeu e Julieta* (1992). With the language created by the company’s earlier work, Galpão created “a sui generis way of doing theatre, enriched by multifaceted rituals that incorporate popular culture of Minas Gerais, Brazilian social reality and universal themes” (Alves and Noe 58).

We can conclude that like most festivals discussed in chapter 2, Galpão strives to educate and entertain and close the gap or efface the differences in access to high and popular culture. The company’s main goal then is to popularize theatre as an art form, to speak directly to the masses, to the poor and uneducated, but also to

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91 “It was for love”, “Run while you can”, “Sorrow Street”, “An imaginary Molière”, “A man is a man”, “Romeo and Juliet.”
the wealthy and cultivated; mixing layers, blending labels and hierarchies, often through classical texts that are cannibalized, digested and presented in a mixed plate of cultural syncretism for all to savour. Their most famous example is the creation, in 1992, of their *Romeu e Julieta*.

**3.5. Grupo Galpão’s *Romeu e Julieta***

In one of the several festivals in which Grupo Galpão participated, a well-known director from São Paulo took interest in the company, acknowledging their potential in rescuing the festive aspect of the theatre, as a great popular celebration on the streets, not unlike carnival\(^{92}\) and those ancient practices from the Middle Ages and Elizabethan England, such as festivals, games, pageants, etc.\(^{93}\)

**3.5.1. Creating *Romeu e Julieta*\(^ {94}\)**

In 1991, Gabriel Villela met the group and expressed his desire to work with the company’s main means of transport (an old station-wagon Chevrolet), giving it a symbolic meaning and turning it into the central prop of a performance. Villela was fascinated by the possibilities that such an unexpected prop could bring, in translating to our days the image of the ancient carriage used to transport wandering acting troupes and in taking the show to all corners of the country, reaching those who had never seen a theatre play before, let alone one written 400 years earlier on the other side of the Atlantic. They had no idea of the proportions those ideas would take.

From the very beginning Gabriel Villela had and idea to invest a classic text with a popular, circussy language rooted in the culture of Minas Gerais, while focusing on the state wagon as the main stage of the action. The group then conducted workshops that explored those ideas and from that there emerged an outline of a tragicomic *Romeo and Juliet*. The original text would work as the canvas on which they would paint, with Brazilian colours, a universal love story – or, in the words of the producer, Carlos Brandão:

...[o texto deveria ser] o eixo central em torno do qual girariam a amplitude e universalidade da palavra lírica e dramática, com a poesia, comunicabilidade e emotividade do teatro do Galpão e do

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\(^{92}\) For more on the origins and an analysis of the carnivalesque, see Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (1992).

\(^{93}\) Discussed in detail in chapter 2. For more, see Laroque, *Shakespeare’s Festive World* (1993).

\(^{94}\) For more details on the creative process of *Romeu e Julieta*, see Brandão, *Diário de Montagem*, livro I.
cosmos mineiro. Tal inserção do universal no particular, tal conjugação do texto clássico com a neblina e o pó das estradas e de Minas levariam a uma das mais difíceis tarefas da dramaturgia pretendida pelo diretor: articular a tragédia do bardo inglês com o épico do sertão e a narrativa de Guimarães Rosa.95

I will discuss the texts used in the production later on in this chapter, but first, I would like to explore the creative path of the troupe as they started reinventing Shakespeare’s play.

Testing the grounds for the production, the company performed the sketch resulted from their workshop in a churchyard. The grounds were part of the Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Ouro Preto96 (in Minas Gerais), one of the main historic cities in Brazil, chosen as World Heritage Site by Unesco thanks to its important Baroque97 architecture (see Appendix 8).

Ouro Preto occupies a cherished place in Brazilian history and memory. It fostered an important Baroque revival and its cultural effervescence attracted famous painters, sculptors and poets. There, in 1789, while the French Revolution reached its first climax in Europe, and the North American colonies had already acquired their independence, activists tried to gain independence from Portugal with an attempt at revolution. Though an elite movement defended by highly educated enthusiasts, it lacked in organization and consistency. Having being informed against to the government, they failed and suffered heavy retaliation, but guaranteed an image of martyrdom and freedom in the national imagination. To the extent that even today, the death of its most famous leader is celebrated as a public holiday every year, on 21 April98.

95 “…[the text should be] the central axis around which would turn the scale and universality of the word lyrical and dramatic with the poetry, communicability and sensibility of Galpão’s theatre and the cosmos of Minas Gerais. Such insertion of the universal in the particular, such a combination of a classic text with the fog and dust of the roads and of Minas would lead to one of the hardest tasks desired by the director: the articulation of the tragedy of the English bard with the epic of the sertão [backlands] and Guimarães Rosa’s narrative.” (15 anos 95)
96 Meaning “black gold”, was firstly called “Vila Rica” (rich village) because of its importance during the gold rush in Brazil in the 18th century.
97 The Baroque architecture from Minas Gerais is very peculiar. It was focused on Rococo style, based on opulent use of gold and for the use of asymmetry and irregular proportions. The uneven and hilly terrains in Minas Gerais demanded a specific approach. They used a type of stone that can only be found in the area. Catholic churches in Ouro Preto are the main examples of this style. (Wikipedia)
98 It is interesting to notice how idealized this movement has been in the Brazilian imagination. It became a symbol of contestation and independence, even though the elite leading it had no intention of improving the life of the majority of the population, intending to keep the same social hierarchy and the slave system, for instance. For a more critical view on the movement, see Mario Schmidt, Nova História Crítica do Brasil, p.79-80.
This parenthesis about Ouro Preto allows us to understand that the group, consciously or not, was actually making an identity statement when playing the drafts of their production in such a symbolic site, one that would immediately speak to treasured myths in the minds of all mineiros. The affirmation and celebration of Brazilian culture in their production began to show even stronger emblematic meanings.

Back in Belo Horizonte, the director began designing the costumes before starting the rehearsals, creating the characters and the story from them, out to the scene, back to the text, then, on to the actors, for them to show what they knew of circus techniques, stunts and music. Picking up any object lying around, Villela arranged the space and the props with what they had: bamboos, a ladder, old night gowns… And a ragged colourful parasol bought from an ice cream trolley on the streets. That shabby, worn out thing was to become the diadem that would coronate the narrator, their own version of Shakespeare/Rosa (see Appendix 2).

It is from such simple ideas that the poetry of the company’s productions emanates. Originally, there was no intention to make a sophisticated production. On the contrary, the group aimed at offering performances closer to the reality of the ordinary people who were going to watch them, who could identify themselves in the story, while, paradoxically, being transported to an idealistic and romantic world, i.e to a remote place where love triumphed. Incidentally, this romantic, idealistic view of Brandão, the dramaturge⁹⁹, is also at work in some of his writings:

Diante de um presente em que até o sentimento amoroso é objeto de negócio, nada melhor do que apontar como Romeu e Julieta se entregam ao amor, desafiam o mundo e conquistam o seu destino e a sua liberdade. Um teatro que mude as pessoas: só assim eu o entendo como arte...¹⁰⁰

To transport Verona down the tropics and make the story truly mineira, Villela envisaged a fusion of Shakespeare and Guimarães Rosa (1908-1967), born in Minas Gerais and one of the greatest Brazilian novelists. It was the ‘dramaturge’s job to establish a conversation between their works and blend the texts into a harmonised dialogue.

⁹⁹ As Brandão calls his function, since his task was to recreate and mold the play’s text.
¹⁰⁰ “Faced with the present times when even the feeling of love is an object of business, nothing better than to point out how Romeo and Juliet surrender to love, defy the world and conquer their destiny and their freedom. A theater that changes people, only like this do I understand it as art...” (Brandão, 15 anos, 97). The author touches the subject several times on his production journal (Diário de Montagem, p. 24-27, 29, 32, 33, 39, 58, 95, 101, etc).
3.5.2. The texts – A dialogue between Shakespeare, Pennaforte and Rosa.

According to his production journal[^101], Carlos Antônio Leite Brandão, a philosopher, architect and professor in Belo Horizonte, was invited to introduce the troupe to the Shakespearean universe, and more generally, to the Renaissance, Art history, the Baroque in Minas Gerais and its culture in the 18th century (the aesthetics of the play was to be based on a mix of all these contexts). He was then asked to be the ‘dramaturge’, which was described by him as being a “researcher, hermeneutist and poet” (Diário 99). Brandão would have to compose a new text, while cutting the poetry of Shakespeare, sewing it to Rosa’s Veredas and reassembling it all into Galpão’s dramatic text.

For the work on Romeo and Juliet, Brandão e Villela chose Onestaldo Pennaforte’s translation, the first made by a Brazilian, published in 1940. Pennaforte, in his turn, had used the Arden Shakespeare edition commented upon by Edward Dowden (1900). Pennaforte’s is considered as a classic version, highly praised for its efforts in keeping the original alternation of verse and prose, and in recreating the original atmosphere, while making it accessible[^102]. Being accessible was one of the main goals of the group, especially considering the dispersive environment of the streets (this production was initially planned as a street performance only) and the different portions of the audience they targeted; it also made sense because of the popular but poetic effect they were trying to achieve.

Today, Pennaforte’s style seems a little old-fashioned, but its “florid” language and baroque tone (The Globe, Programme notes 2000, 12) confers the spectacle intended by Villela a nostalgic spirit and a lyrical atmosphere that contrasts with the urban environment, meeting the audience’s longing for a return to the past, out of the contemporary chaos of our pragmatic world[^103].

Considering the social and economic reality of a great part of the spectators they wanted to attract, it made sense to use language that was accessible but also

[^102]: Maria Clara Versiani Galery, in her doctoral thesis, quotes reviews of Pennaforte’s translation:
“... [Pennaforte’s text] would no longer sadden the popular Shakespeare, thinking that his work had been transformed into an erudite project inaccessible to the audience. Pennaforte’s dialogue is easy and natural; it respects even the bawdy in the text of Shakespeare... Pennaforte rises to the heights of the immortal Bard, rendering his text in a new and simple translation” (Antonio Candido, literary critic, quoted in Galery, Identifying Strategies..., 173).
[^103]: See 2.7, for more on the nostalgic feelings that partly explain the popularity of festival activities today. See the personal interview, question 4, in appendix 5 for Eduardo Moreira’s similar opinion about Pennaforte’s text.
exotic, producing a spectacle that could communicate with the audience’s reality, of suffering under social conventions, but that could also offer a moment of transportation, of living something different, in a different era, in a different world. As an attempt to offer hope and encouragement through the triumph of passionate love over all other issues despite a difficult context, Pennaforté’s text matched the romantic ideals of Brandão\(^{104}\), who so often declared his idealistic soul in speeches such as: “…só no amor e na liberdade nos salvamos... Num mundo povoado pela pragmaticidade das relações, não há nenhuma lição mais revolucionária do que a da peça de Shakespeare.”\(^{105}\)

This translated version’s baroque tone also suited the setting and the music, as well as a statement of appreciation of the cultural heritage of Minas Gerais. The Baroque period in Brazil (18\(^{th}\) century) corresponds to the golden age mineira (with its specific Rococo aesthetics), when the mining activity flourished, leading Minas Gerais to occupy a very significant place in national history. Pennaforté’s text hints to that period, dearly esteemed in the minds of most mineiros.

It was when Villela decided he wanted a narrator, a story teller, a Shakespeare of the backlands, that Guimarães Rosa’s Veredas entered in the process. Grande Sertão: Veredas (meaning “Great Backlands: Tracks”, but translated in English as “The Devil to Pay in the Backlands”) was published in 1956 and is one of the most important works\(^{106}\) of the Brazilian Modernism. Its sheer size, linguistic experimentation and focus on regionalism guaranteed Rosa a significant place in the country’s literary history. It focuses on the life in the sertão, arid backlands mainly in the Northeast of Brazil, but also including the northern parts of the state of Minas Gerais (officially part of the Southeast region).

Extremely difficult to translate, the language in Veredas is a mix of archaic, colloquial and regional speech. It was, then, the perfect combination of poetry and mineiridade\(^{107}\) that suited Villela’s project: amalgamating a classic international text, a classic translation and a classic Brazilian text through elements of popular culture to create a popular and poetic spectacle.

\(^{104}\) Brandão gives more rational reasons for choosing Pennaforté, talking about form, rhymes and fidelity in his journal (Diário de Montagem 103).

\(^{105}\) “...only in love and freedom can we be saved...In a world peopled by the pragmaticalness/pragmatization of relationships, there is no lesson more revolutionary than that of Shakespeare” (Diário de Montagem 101).

\(^{106}\) In 2002, Veredas was the only Brazilian work named among the top 100 best fictional books of all times. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/may/08/books.booksnews

\(^{107}\) The condition of being mineiro, from Minas Gerais.
Rosa’s text and style is mainly present in the new figure created by Villela and Brandão: the narrator. He functions as the original chorus announcing and explaining events, but remains present throughout the whole story, connecting Shakespeare’s drama, Rosa’s text and Galpão’s performance (Dias 52). Physically, he is Shakespeare, but speaks more like Rosa, with poetry that is sertaneja\(^{108}\) (see Appendix 2). In the words of Galery, “[t]hrough the speech of the narrator, Brandão attempted to reproduce the ‘transcendental regionalism’ that characterizes Rosa’s elaborate literary rendering of the language of the sertão” (181).

This syncretic character plays with words, metaphors, neologisms\(^{109}\), landscapes and scenes from both texts, turning Verona into some place in Veredas, in an unintended, but welcoming alliteration. The prologue, for instance, uses Shakespeare’s outline presenting the story to describe the typical traits of a landscape that is not Italian, but sertaneja: “o carregume destes secos”, o “negrume deste pó”.\(^{110}\) In the epilogue, wordplay is used to show the lovers being linguistically united in the sky/heaven: “Romeolua e estrelajúlia celebram o círcocéu das paixões”\(^{111}\). Dias explains the effects of the narrator’s language:

Em suas falas, a erudição e a universalidade dos versos do texto clássico se conjugam com a forma narrativa tipicamente mineira e sertaneja, causando um [sic] certo estranhamento que leva o espectador à reflexão. Por meio do sincretismo literário, desde a primeira cena, novos sentidos poéticos são atribuídos ao texto original na mescla, criação e recriação de palavras.\(^{112}\)

One of the main aspects of his language and role is to present visually and orally the metaphor of precipitation and of life as a circus, the next topics of this work.

3.5.3. The scenic choices: Circus, precipitation, street theatre and the audience

\(^{108}\) Quality of something or someone that belongs to the sertão.

\(^{109}\) For detailed examples and analysis on the language used in the text, see Alves and Noe, Expressões Mineiras no teatro (DATE), and Dias 2.4.1. O texto.

\(^{110}\) Very difficult to translate, as it uses regional expressions and colloquialisms: “The dark clouds of these dry places”, “the blackness of this dust.” (Brandão, 1992:i, in Dias 53).

\(^{111}\) “Romemoon and starjulía celebrate the circusky of passions” (Brandão, 1992:41, in Alves and Noe 91).

\(^{112}\) “In his lines, the erudition and universality of the verses of the classic text combine with the narrative form typically of Minas Gerais and of the hinterlands, causing some strangeness that takes the viewer to reflection. Through the literary syncretism, from the first scene, poetic new meanings are assigned to the original text in the mix, creation and recreation of the words” (53).
The circus occupies a significant place in Brazilian popular culture, being connected with carnival as a form of entertainment that is both ritualized and transgressive. Along the lines of Laroque’s and Bakhtin’s discussions on the carnivalesque, Alves and Noe explain that

[o circo] está intimamente relacionado, em estrutura e em espírito, à tradição do carnaval...[os dois ocupando] um espaço liminar entre a vida e a arte e [produzindo] um tipo de montagem cujos códigos performáticos envolvem a violação de regras e a inversão de hierarquias. O circo e o carnaval ocupam o lugar que Kafka chama de ‘entre-mundo’, onde o ator e o espectador se encontram para experimentar a sensação hilariante da alegria festiva e do riso regenerativo que os caracterizam.\(^{113}\)

In the text of *Romeu e Julieta*, the word ‘circus’ is referred to many times. In the prologue, for instance, the narrator says “Mas meu senhor, minha senhora, a vida não é um circo às avessas?”, and in the epilogue, “...o circocéu das paixões” and “Eu desarmo o miúdo circo meu”\(^{114}\). It seems Galpão takes the famous line ‘All the world is a stage’ and turns it into a more Brazilian version, cannibalized and carnivalized, where ‘all life is a circus’. The idea is that living is an adventure, full of risks and trials. To put it differently, things turn upside-down and do not necessarily follow a perfect order. The metaphor matches Rosa’s narrator and main character who declares: “viver é perigoso”\(^{115}\).

This idea is translated and explained through the props, the scenes and their use of space: the actors perform illusionist tricks, walk as if on a tightrope, do acrobatics, stride on stilts, make up as clowns, carry colourful parasols, etc. The parasol, ragged, simple, poetically covering the narrator’s head, hiding the couple’s kiss and used as element of balance in the tightrope walk, reminds the theme of precipitation, or instability, as well as it connects with Brazilian culture, as a typical accessory to dance *Frevo*\(^{116}\), another carnivalesque practice (see Appendix 6).

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\(^{113}\) “[the circus] is closely related in structure and in spirit with the tradition of carnival ... [both occupying] a liminal space between life and art, and [producing] a type of staging whose performative codes involve the violation of rules and inversion of hierarchies. The circus and the carnival occupy the place that Kafka calls ‘in-between world’, where the actor and the spectator meet to experience the exhilarating feeling of festive joy and regenerative laughter that characterize them.” (22) The authors referred in this quotation to Bouissac, 1985: 7-8 and Bakhtin, 1984: 10-12, 66-73.

\(^{114}\) “But sir, madam, isn’t life a topsy-turvy circus?” (Brandão, 1992: i, in Dias, 53), “the circusky of passions” and “I dismantle the little circus that is mine” (Brandão, 1992: 41, in Alves and Noe 92), my italics.

\(^{115}\) “Living is a dangerous thing” (in Brandão, *Diário* 110).

\(^{116}\) Music and dance created in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, one of the main cities of the Northeast of Brazil. It is a fast beat, closely linked to Carnival performances and it involves acrobatic movements with a very colourful parasol.
The important concept of (in)balance becomes fully materialized throughout the performance. Romeo walks most of the time on stilts, while carrying a parasol and playing the accordion. Juliet walks mainly *en pointe*, and goes up and down the ladders in ballet dance movements\(^{117}\). The result is that both seem to be searching all the time, in vain, for balance, to control their passionate youth and their fate. Instability reigns, resulting from Villela’s intention to show *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragedy of precipitation\(^{118}\).

To achieve that effect, the director insisted on working on the physical movement of the actors, trying to make the words emerge from their body movement to guide the vocal sound. His first technique was to apply elastic tapes on the ground, asking them to recite their lines while walking on those tapes, equilibrating as if on a tightrope, forcing their bodies to throw the words from deep inside. The oscillating movement matches the other elements of instability, the jugglery and the clownery, in a comic caricature that counterpoints the tragedy of the story. With time, that exercise lost its efficacy, so Villela went one step further to produce the effect of living on the edge of an abyss. The director himself explains how he intensified this balance tension through circus elements:

> We worked on a high bar like a tightrope – reading our lines, improvising, playing music, to give it all a kind of energy, again like a circus – and to give it danger too. Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy of ‘precipitation’, an adolescent tragedy, all happening very quickly; the characters don’t stop and think. Hence this movement, this ever-present possibility that you may be falling, which gave our play its physical language. (The Globe, Programme notes 2000, 12)

Putting that bar three metres above the floor, Villela recovered a sense of instability in the actors, despite the initial and serious reserve on the part of the actors who did fall and got hurt a few times in the exercise. “É preciso viver o perigo para o espetáculo manter-se na precipitação”\(^{119}\), said the director (in Brandão, *15 anos* 103).

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\(^{117}\) Incidentally, here is another wink from the company at the mixing of elements traditionally belonging to erudite culture, such as the ballet.

\(^{118}\) Here being used in its first and third meanings according to the *OED*: I.1. a. The action or an act of casting down or falling from a height; the fact of being cast down; vertical fall or descent. /II.3.a. Sudden and hurried action, haste; quickness; abruptness.

\(^{119}\) “It is necessary to live the danger for the spectacle to keep in precipitation.”
The circus elements function, then, to reinforce the theme developed through the visual and spatial elements to say that “a vida é frágil, a mudança é provável, a queda é inevitável e tudo é instável no circo das inversões.”

Along with the comic approach, another feature of Galpão’s show arises from their connection with the circus: their commitment to street spectacle as a tool to popularize theatre, to include the audience participation, to ‘deinstitutionalize’ the stage and to search for new alternatives for the theatrical space.

Seeking direct contact with the audience, after some months of work on *Romeu e Julieta*, the director took the company for open rehearsals in Morro Vermelho, a small and poor village in Minas Gerais, about 60 kms from the capital, Belo Horizonte. The rural environment and architecture influence the costumes and props, so a few items and details are added: quicklime from the houses, plastic flowers, bumper stickers, wooden crosses in oil cans, etc (Brandão, *15 anos* 104). The circular cosmos as their ‘stage’ limited by the lines drawn with flour on the ground gives once again the idea of a circus ring and invites the audience to come closer. The beauty and power of the open space touches everyone, including the director: “Reconquistando a atmosfera do espaço cênico grego, ator e paisagem se fundem e o pôr do sol e o horizonte são capturados dentro da área circular.”

The direct involvement with the audience’s reaction also influenced the text, as Brandão captured their needs and difficulties during the open rehearsals, concluding that expressive texts should be privileged over long descriptions and they should focus on contrasting fast and slow, horizontality and verticality, action and lyricism (*Diário* 56).

The village’s folk got involved, to the point that in the bigger towns around the area, people talked about the company and their show. In his journal, Brandão writes that people reported the vibration and life the company had brought to the village, and Shakespeare’s lines and the group’s songs were repeated in different houses, squares and streets (*Diário* 56) – sometimes the children were very efficient as prompters, reminding the actors of their lines (15 anos 113). These were people

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120 Other examples present in their performances are the use of puppetry, mime, juggling, pyrotechnical stunts, etc.
121 “life is fragile, change is probable, falling is inevitable and all is instable in the circus of inversions” (Alves and Noe 92).
122 These were part of the company’s objectives when they signed a work proposal at the moment of their foundation in 1982 (in Alves and Noe 248).
123 “Recapturing the atmosphere of the Greek scenic area actor and landscape merge, and the sunset and the horizon are captured within the circular area” (Brandão, *15 anos* 105).
who had probably never heard of Shakespeare or seen a theatre show before, and who would have never experienced any of that during their whole lives, were not for the group’s work there.

Wanda Fernandes, one of the founding members of Galpão, wrote an essay, in 1982, on the nature of the street theatre. In this text, she argues that this type of theatre is more political and provocative than the conventional one, because it surprises an audience which did not intentionally seek to be part of the show, and which did not intend to be provoked. Their routine is invaded by magic figures; street theatre interrupts the daily order, it interferes with the pace of urban life, “é como uma miragem: de repente, no meio da rua, surgem figuras extraterrenas...o teatro na rua rouba o tempo das pessoas, que às vezes vão chegar atrasadas meia hora ao seu destino.”124 In his Dictionnaire du Théâtre Patrice Pavis explains: « La conquête d’espace non prévu pour le théâtre [...] achève de désorienter le public. L’indispensable effet de désstabilisation des acquis est à son comble : tout est théâtre, rien ne l’est plus » (375).

Because of its nature, it works on a challenging and unpredictable space that has to be seduced, charmed, and conquered. In its direct confrontation with the public space, it magnifies its political power. Here we touch on an interesting point that deserves further research in the future. Indeed, because of its dangerous political potential and marginal character, street theatre today tends to be institutionalized, as the state tries to control/contain it, determining specific areas for it to take place or holding it as part of official festivals. Perhaps that was exactly the problem behind the political maneuver by the City Department of Cultural Affairs (previously mentioned in this chapter), to institutionalize the festival created by Galpão, at the time called FIT.125

In Romeu e Julieta, the theatrical space, like in an arena theatre, is created as a magic circus ring and the actors are surrounded by the spectators in a semi-circle. Different from a conventional proscenium theatre, where the audience is seated and generally cannot move, it allows each spectator to get closer, further, change angles, in an active relationship with what they see, hear and also feel. At the same time, the staging does not aim at creating any realistic atmosphere, and the audience is often

124 “…it is like a mirage: suddenly, there in the streets, there are extraterrestrial figures ... street theatre steals people’s time, who will sometimes be half an hour late to their destination” (Alves and Noe 250).
125 Event previously mentioned in 3.4.
reminded that they are participating in theatrical representation. This is particularly the case in the scene where Friar Lawrence is blessing the newlyweds and, turning and talking to the ‘mass of sinners’ around him, he begins to sprinkles holy water on spectators (offering not only a visual and auditive experience, but also kinesthetic). Paradoxically, it is in street theatre that one finds the most confusing barriers between fiction and reality. Fernandes, for example, stated that “o teatro na rua pode ser também aquele em que o ator se confunde com o público, e o espetáculo, com a realidade. É o mais próximo à realidade. É a farsa mais real...”

This circus/street theatre, then, plays a social role, restoring a form of participative entertainment for the people, while educating and emphasizing Brazilian cultural heritage. It also uses the stage as a space of social criticism, as it is convincingly explained by Regina Horta Duarte (1995: 83-87, quoted in Alves and Noe): “...enquanto o teatro do século XIX funcionava no centro da sociedade, apoiado pela estrutura do poder e com propósitos didáticos, o circo, nômade e instável, operava na periferia literal e metafórica do país como elemento subversivo que ameaçava os valores da elite.” The street theatre that Galpão creates relates the group to those ancient itinerant troupes of artists who performed in fairs and festivals, wandering from town to town, occupying a peripheral place, in the margins of the official theatre, taking art to the far corners of the country.

It is in this quality of reaching out for those far corners that once again street theatre, and Romeo e Julieta in this case, fulfills an important social function. As previously mentioned in this chapter, a large number of Brazilians, even today, has little access to cultural events, firstly because they generally cannot afford it, and secondly because there is not enough educational and cultural initiative to encourage and attract them. Moreira explains that in Brazil, people are often afraid to attend to artistic manifestations, especially in official places, because they feel like they do not belong there, the lines dividing privileged and popular culture crushing their aspirations. Popularization is thus one of the founding roles of street theatre:

[o teatro de rua] tem uma importância grande para dizer para as pessoas que o lazer, a cultura, é um elemento tão importante

126 “street theatre can also be one in which the actor is confused with the spectator, and the spectacle, with reality. It is the closest to reality. It is the most real pretense” in Alves and Noe (251).
127 “...while the nineteenth-century theatre was found in a central place in society, supported by the power structure and with didactic purposes, the circus, nomadic and unstable, operated literally and metaphorically on the periphery of the country as a subversive element that threatened the values of the elite” (25).
Brandão confirms that for many people, Galpão’s street performances are their first theatre event and because of their pleasant and enriching experience, they began to attend, understand and enjoy theatre (15 anos: 111). That audience was as diverse as society itself, including children and the elderly, the poor and the rich, workers, intellectuals, artists, etc.

In her essay, Wanda Fernandes also noticed that the poor children from the suburbs (the poor peripheral areas), much less fortunate and educated, were those who most needed the emotion, vibration and magic the group could offer. They were spectators who had never seen anything like a live theatrical performance, and the experience seemed unbelievable, fantastic, surreal, so they wanted to come closer, touch and feel the fantasy (in Alves and Noe 251). As we can see from the example of the village of Morro Vermelho, children and the population in general quickly absorbed the artistic atmosphere and even learnt the Bard’s lines, singing and reciting Shakespeare, despite a social and economic background that one would hardly fit to the scene. Thanks to the comic elements, the circus techniques and an approach to demystify the canon, Galpão makes Shakespeare relevant, contemporary and Brazilian.

Villela wanted to work with Galpão because they embody a spirit mambembe, and he was fascinated by the possibility of taking theatre, the allegedly exclusive and highbrow Shakespeare, to unexplored places, far and out of the Rio/São Paulo centralizing axis, to those most needy of art, poetry and magic:

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128 “[street theater] has a great importance to show people that leisure, culture is an element as important as education, health, well being; people need the ability to dream. It is very important that people see that, and that art go to the street, not enclosed in playhouses, which are expensive, and [where] people do not feel capable, [feeling] that is not their place. Here in Europe, this problem is much smaller. In Brazil, these people think that it is not their place [or right] to be in a theatre.” Personal interview, London, 20/05/12. See Appendix 5.

129 It means ordinary, of little value, but it is also used to designate amateurish companies in the fringes of official theatre, wandering troupes generally with shabby equipment and in a precarious situation. The group is proud to be called mambembe, because of its popular and circussy character, its creative freedom and because it brings them closer to the reality of the majority of the population, demystifying the erudite position occupied by the performative arts in general in Brazil.
Procurei o Grupo Galpão buscando neste encontro teatral, estreitar os meus vínculos com as ruas, as cidades e o povo do Brasil de dentro. Este Romeu e Julieta, com cara de goiabada e queijo, é assumidamente uma declaração de amor que faço a Shakespeare e ao artista mambembe.

The director acknowledged Galpão’s ability to rescue the ancestral force with which theatre promoted festivity and celebration in the streets (Brandão, 15 anos 92) and after having taken the Bard to the far corners of Brazil, it was time for Shakespeare to go home.

3.5.4. Shakespeare para inglês ver, or, Shakespeare as you like it

In 2000, while Brazil celebrated its 500th anniversary, Galpão was invited to participate in the annual Globe-to-Globe theatre celebration in London and present Romeu e Julieta in Portuguese. That international festival sought to explore and promote artistic activities generated by Shakespeare’s works in different cultures, from European countries to places Shakespeare could not have heard of. That year, for instance, along with a Brazilian Romeo and Juliet, there was a Zulu Macbeth, a Cuban Tempest and an Indian King Lear (The Globe, Programme notes, 2000:7).

Obviously, such an initiative investigates “the ways in which differing social, cultural and political influences find expression through Shakespeare as well as exploring how the plays themselves are adapted and illuminated” (7). It is interesting, therefore, to notice the double purpose declared by the artistic direction of the Globe. They claimed to be firstly interested in understanding how different people imbedded in other cultural identities may use and express themselves through the English Bard, but they also recognized the strength of a different approach, one

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130I came after the Grupo Galpão searching in this theatrical encounter to strengthen my ties to the streets, cities and people of the interior of Brazil. This Romeu and Julieta, tasting like guava jelly and cheese [a typical dessert of Minas Gerais], is admittedly a declaration of love to Shakespeare and the itinerant artist.” Brandão, Diário 17.

131A common expression in Brazil to refer to an action taken simply to pretend that something is being done about a problem, but in reality not effective at all. It literally means: “Shakespeare for the English to see.” It probably comes from 1831, when the Regency Government of Brazil enacted in that year, a law banning the slave trade, yielding to the slave abolition pressures of England. But as the general feeling was that the law would not be fulfilled, rumour had it that the minister had made a law just for the English to see, but not to be respected in practice. Indeed, only twenty years later was another law promulgated definitely prohibiting the slave trafficking (see the Internet site http://super.abril.com.br/superarquivo/2003/conteudo_121130.shtml ). The expression was used as the subtitle of the DVD (see Appendix 8) produced during the performances of the group in the Globe in 200. Here it is simply a joke to play with the fact that Shakespeare was English and that the group is performing in England, in a replica of Shakespeare’s theatre, while the play the group offers is just pretending to do something serious.

132If we tell Brazilian history from the perspective of the arrival of the Portuguese in April 1500.
originated in translation (traditionally conceived as an inferior copy)\textsuperscript{133}, to give life and new breath to the most performed plays in the world, in their own birthplace.

In 2012, thirty-seven companies from thirty-seven different countries intend to perform their own Shakespeare versions at the Globe. The tone is of celebration, as the direction states in the first page of the festival programme: “The Globe to Globe festival is a carnival of stories” (2012:1). The related themes of festivity and the carnivalesque, so essential in Shakespeare’s time and extensively discussed by François Laroque, are rescued and privileged side by side with the issue of translation. Translation has gained such an importance and value that the programme opens with an article entitled “Flexible Shakespeare - Dennis Kennedy considers the gains to be made in performing the Bard without his language.” We must also remember that the programme is not aimed at scholars, but at ordinary spectators, either with little or with considerable academic knowledge of Shakespeare, which shows how translation and cultural diversity have now become part of everybody’s life.

In texts with very accessible and pedagogic language, the focus of discussion of the festival programme is the global reach of Shakespeare and the ability of other cultures to adapt, renew, refresh and empower his works. The relevance and contemporary tone given to the text through translation makes it more accessible and closer to the reality of the streets of each of these countries. In a way, then, it seems that translated works benefit from their status, instead of suffering from it, producing meaningful and accessible new works. As Kennedy puts it: “In English \textit{Hamlet} is a series of well-know quotations, in Chinese it is a new play. Further gains include a more easily achievable social and political topicality.” Quoting Salman Rushdie, Kennedy then adds that “it is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation. I cling obstinately to the notion that something can be gained” (2).

Eduardo Moreira, one of the founding members of Grupo Galpão, in a personal interview, also said: “Para mim, foi incrível ver os espetáculos de outros aqui no Globe, vi da Sérbia, da Bielorússia, etc. Você vê o Shakespeare, mas você também

\textsuperscript{133} The traditional view sees translation as “an instrumental and parasite procedure...[hence] the adage \textit{tradutore traditor}”, and evaluated it according to notions of fidelity and authorial presence (‘original’ vs ‘copy’). Fortunately, in recent years, translation studies have become an academic discipline and reached “a privileged status as an instrument of mediation between national cultures”, as well as critical currents and theories have contested those ideas of hierarchy and categorisation (Galery 19-20). For more on the relationships between translation, authenticity, appropriation and cultural identity, see Galery, \textit{Identifying strategies}, p.18-49.
Many commentators agree that adapting Shakespeare into other languages and cultures offer more advantages than disadvantages; it is not, therefore, a question of what is original and what is an inferior copy.

The existence and popularity of festivals prove the new status translation has gained and how Shakespeare is flexible and made relevant in distinctly different cultures and languages. It also shows how different (sometimes radically) interpretations and adaptations can be, which raises the question of Shakespeare’s mythical universality. Kennedy, still in his article for the Globe-to-Globe Festival, states that rather than considering that the plays are a supreme treatise of unchanging and universal aspects that everybody everywhere can immediately identify themselves with, it is rather safer to say that the way the audience has responded to Shakespeare in different parts of the world has been determined by the location, time and culture to which they belong (3). Likewise, Graham Holderness, in The Shakespeare Myth, thinks that “[f]or every particular present, Shakespeare is, here, now, always, what is currently being made of him” (XVI).

How then, can we explain the global reach of Shakespeare’s works, with productions that work well in completely distinct contexts? More than the idea of an intrinsic universal quality, Shakespeare’s plays’ greatest triumph seems to be flexibility. Marcus D. Gregio stated that his status as the most popular playwright is rather “due to the fact that...[Shakespeare] has created print that is complex, rich, multifaceted, and – in performance- utterly flexible” (18 my italics), and this is confirmed by Kennedy: “His plays are open documents that can be made to fit many styles and many meanings, from the cinematic realism of Al Pacino to the overtly stagey song and dance of Beijing Opera” (3). Therefore, considering the text’s flexibility and the collective character of the drama writing process in Shakespeare’s time, it becomes problematic to label specific and conventional practices as close to the ‘original’, ‘authentic’ and ‘superior’ text.

Proof of that is the way the improbable and unusual production of Galpão’s Romeu e Julieta has been received and praised. Aimara da Cunha Resende, director of the Shakespearean Studies Centre in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, declared: “Vocês...
estão trazendo Shakespeare para o lugar de onde ele nunca deveria ter saído: o mundo popular da rua.” 135 The creative directors of the Globe Theatre commented, in 2000, on how the group succeeded in renewing the Shakespearean drama which had previously been “excessivamente dogmatizado e congelado sob o peso de uma tradição oficial, submissa ao seu passado e aos ícones de sua cultura.” 136 Eduardo Moreira agreed, explaining that perhaps because Shakespeare is less part of school education and national culture in Brazil, it allows groups from places like Brazil to freely adapt and take liberties with the text, achieving

[uma fidelidade absoluta na infidelidade, resgatando o espírito popular do Shakespeare que pra eles é mais difícil...que não conseguem tomar certas liberdades com a obra... [talvez] porque eles recitam Shakespeare desde os cinco anos de idade, alguns foram traumatizados na escola. A gente tem menos formação nesse sentido, ninguém estudou Shakespeare na escola no Brasil, pegamos Shakespeare de uma maneira mais livre, sem amarras e restrições. 137]

Moreira’s statement echoes what Brazilian Shakespearean specialist Barbara Heliodora (1923- ), famous for being strict and harsh, stated in her review entitled “Perfection in Infidelity”: “a production where the infidelities are not a result of the presumption that one can do better than Shakespeare, but out of an act of love and playfulness, where songs, colours, visual ingenuity and even childhood games are used” (quoted and translated in Galery 183).

With the fusion of Shakespeare’s text and Guimarães Rosa’s, the classic universe merges with the universe mineiro in an intimate conversation in which the resulting universe renews a dramatic work excessively dogmatized under the weight and officialdom of authority and tradition. The tone of festivity and celebration makes the new Shakespearian show even more accessible and inviting, as a critic aptly said about the audience’s emotive response (especially the general weeping):

135 “You are bringing Shakespeare back from the place where he should never have left: the popular world of the streets” (in Brandão, 15 anos 100).
136 “excessively dogmatised and frozen under the weight of an official tradition, subjugated to its past and its culture icons” (in Brandão, 15 anos 111).
137 “an absolute fidelity in their infidelity, rescuing the popular spirit of Shakespeare which is more difficult for them [the English] ... they do not feel free to take liberties with the work ... perhaps because they recite Shakespeare since the age of five, some were traumatized at school. We have less training in this area, no one has studied Shakespeare at school in Brazil, we look at Shakespeare from a more free perspective, unfettered and without restrictions” Personal interview, London, 20/05/12.
3.6. New perspectives for popular theatre

In Brazil, the Romeu e Julieta production and the festivals the company has promoted have opened new perspectives for street theatre, proving it is possible to present productions of over ninety minutes in the streets, despite the lower level of concentration and higher possibility of dispersion. It has also conquered new public spaces for art, like busy city squares, parks and courtyards. Brandão cites a review written by a journalist during the first performances stating that the show, in open and free public spaces, for small or big crowds “não se tornaram apenas momentos de grande deleite estético...assumiram também o status de eventos cívicos, ocasiões de confraternização para a população.” These collective manifestations of joy and citizenship work in the same way as theatre festivals, appropriating, cannibalizing and popularizing art, whether it is considered to belong to ‘high’ culture or not, breaking down barriers and dissolving dogmatic notions of what popular culture is and has to offer.

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138 “This Romeo and Juliet is love so juvenile and playful that it brings down all resistance” Nelson de Sá, Folha de São Paulo, 15/07/92, in Brandão, 15 anos 104.
139 “did not become simply great moments of aesthetic delight ... it has also assumed the status of civic events, occasions of celebration for the people” (Clara Arreguy, in Brandão, 15 anos 118).
CONCLUSION

Culture has become something which the state, private businesses, different cultural institutions, as well as the people at large, have come to see as an investment or at least, as a useful tool to express, build, promote and rescue collective identities. Cultural mobility appears as symbolic compensation for one’s economic and social condition, symbolically resisting the system. One way of achieving this mobility is through theatre, a theatrical space where ideas about cultures and values can be debated and negotiated, generating new meanings. In the cases here studied, that has been achieved through the reappropriation of William Shakespeare’s plays. The playwright is revealed as a bridge between two apparent oppositions because of his flexibility and supposedly universal quality, embracing national/international, traditional/innovative, and popular/erudite discourses.

Because of the importance of cultural subjects as grounds to express and negotiate identities, this research calls for deeper investigation on an extensive history of Shakespeare festivals to better understand and illuminate this phenomenon. One that should include productions from countries seldom investigated thus far (such as India, and countries in South America and Africa, for example). An investigation that would show how they have developed all the way from Garrick to the 21st century, that would reveal their educational and social importance, and that would offer further details and evidence of their history in order to preserve the memory, the work and the theatrical practices of our times for the future. Likewise, I call for more critical studies on cases like Grupo Galpão’s production, which must have parallels in other countries all around the world.

In the first chapter, my main focus was to introduce different views on the key concepts that permeated this work. Starting with definitions of culture, I demonstrated how they can vary from a broad anthropological perception, to political discussions, and to debates on value and hierarchy in society. For the purposes of this research, I focused rather on artistic expressions of culture, and more specifically, drama. Secondly, I discussed some of the most common definitions of popular culture including traditional views based on festivity and communal practices as being culture of the people, perceptions focused on the composition of the audience...
(i.e. on the largest number of spectators possible), views on mass produced culture (generally considered as inferior and made by the dominant class to impose itself on the lower classes), but also defenders of cultural expressions engaged in fighting against prejudices.

I chose to use the term to refer to theatre practices that included both or one of the following: traditional expressions that are part of the history and memory of a group, and cultural expressions that seek to include and give voice to a large number of underrepresented people. Such cultural expressions have been seen in my work as a site of negotiation and assertion of identities – these being the positions relevant in the analysis of the specific objects of this research, namely Shakespeare Festivals and the production of a Brazilian version of *Romeo and Juliet*.

After discussing the evolution of Shakespeare’s position from popular entertainment to high literature and the different facets the playwright has assumed in contemporary popular culture, I introduced the first object of this study: Shakespeare Festivals. It is thus only in the second chapter that I approached this cultural phenomenon which helped popularize Shakespeare in different parts of the world.

Beginning with a historical background of the festive and carnivalesque themes in Elizabethan England and the history of Shakespeare festivals, I focused on the contemporary festival practice around Shakespeare, revealing its characteristic elements: limited seasonal run (mostly in summer), outdoor venues or public spaces with pastoral associations, reduced-price performances, and educational programmes. Combined together, these elements generally work for the demystification of Shakespeare as exclusively owned by the expensive indoor circuit and for the construction or affirmation of communal values, while offering social inclusion and meeting a general wishful longing for a mythical, glorious past.

The search for the past is inscribed in our context as post-modern subjects, defined *a priori* as not having a fixed, essential or permanent identity. In need of possibilities of cohesion, the participants seek an opportunity to reaffirm their roots and collective memory. Confirming the existence of a past helps constitute one’s history and therefore, identity. The bridge created in these events closes the gap between the present times and some lost utopian past for which Shakespeare persistently stands. However, this use of Shakespeare as a symbolic alternative to the alienation and fragmentation of postmodern life may at times insert the playwright into the very process of reproduction and commodification characteristic of the
context from which he seems to secure escape. At the same time, the popularity of such festivals (and replica theatres such as The Globe) denotes people’s desire and initiative to find direct encounter with Shakespeare and the image of his times outside all the other mediated versions largely offered in mass-media and the academy, as in an attempt to resist those forms.

The reappropriation of Shakespeare by popular culture demanded further and more detailed analysis, therefore, in the third chapter, I chose to analyse a production of *Romeo and Juliet* by Brazilian company Grupo Galpão. To situate their production in a national framework, I first presented the post-colonial context in which Brazil is placed, including some historical, social and cultural contextualization. As with most countries in this position, issues of national identity are complicated by the anxiety generated from their colonized status, always in a complex relationship with foreign influence. After introducing the topic of Shakespeare in Brazil, I presented Grupo Galpão, their history and mission, highlighting their dedication to a popular form, the street theatre.

Next, I developed the creative process of *Romeu e Julieta*, analysing the text, the scene, the influence of the circus and the importance given to audience participation. This led me to discuss the company’s performance of the play in Portuguese at the Globe Theatre, in London, as an interesting cultural statement consolidating Brazilian and regional identities, in a fascinating cross-over of traditions.

Galpão’s version invested on Shakespeare’s popular facet, appropriating the kinds of theatre performances that are associated with the people and the outdoors, exploring possibilities that go beyond the regional context, as is proven by their success at the Globe. Interestingly enough, Gabriel Villela chose to focus on the wandering troupe style (one of the most marginal theatre forms in Brazil) for this production of *Romeo and Juliet*, resorting to a rudimentary theatrical language that allowed the classic work to speak to the diverse audience found in the street, often caught unadvised. The company’s rendering of the play thus drew consistently from Brazilian popular culture and tradition in order to produce a multilayered text without pretensions to adhere to an ‘original’ or ‘authoritative’ text. Their strategy allowed an approximation between the place and time from which the text was enunciated and the contemporary context of their target audience. The comic approach, the circus elements, the popular and contemporary references to daily life
and even the car on the stage, surprisingly, do not converge in estrangement, but identification by the spectators.

The fruitful interactions between the page and the stage, reinforced by the hybrid intertextuality between the original English play, one of its Portuguese translations and Brazilian literature in Guimarães Rosa’s text, prove that despite the playwright’s canonical status, the staging of his works does not have to be a faithful or an archaeological copy of the (lost) original. More than a debate on what the author ‘meant to say’, the focus is on what the author can offer and say to us here and now. For that, it was necessary to ‘descale’ Shakespeare’s work from official interpretations and reveal new aspects that were already present in its origins, such as its popular character. Refusing fidelity to authoritative and traditional versions, Galpão’s staging ensures their right to freedom and creativity, thus achieving varied possibilities of visual, textual and scenic innovation.

The audience is generally seduced by the performance’s apparent naïve lyricism and by its constant questioning which, in fact, incite the spectator’s own questioning. Such unexpected characteristics actually trigger a new way of perceiving one’s proper place in the world. The detachment provoked by the fact that what the spectators see stems from a foreign work cause them to analyse and accept it while recognising themselves in national elements. In Alves and Noe’s words: “Assim, vemo-nos como estrangeiros em nós mesmos, e isso nos dá o distanciamento crítico necessário inclusive para perceber e valorizar o que guarda de riqueza a nossa subestimada miscigenação cultural.”

Exploring ‘non-theatrical’ spaces, both festivals, with their outdoor programmes, and Galpão, with their street performances, manage to find new expressive potentials which pave the way for new cultural dialogues. The urban environment enriches their popular appeal, as it is the people’s space, allowing them to recover a sense of collective celebration through the appropriation of values that unify the audience as a temporary community. Like the Greek theatre, where actors, ritual, theatrical space and the audience used to blend in a transcendent practice, these forms of popular theatre bring dramatic action back to people’s lives and imagination.

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140 “Thus, we see ourselves as foreigners in ourselves, and that gives us the critical detachment necessary to realize and appreciate the richness of our underestimated cultural miscigenation.”
Both instances seek to shift Shakespeare’s conventional erudite register towards the popular, not simply updating the language or the story, but by engaging the audience to participate collectively with their time, space, each other and the performance. These productions create a democratic atmosphere, as if Shakespeare was set free, as he is presented in a less solemn, less ‘proper’, less high-concept, and more entertaining manner, while promoting a sense of communalism.

The danger of these experiences of communality seeking an idealised past is that they sometimes serve the purposes of other agendas, such as extreme nationalism, Anglophilia and elitism. It is through productions such as *Romeu e Julieta* that theatre can voice popular dissatisfaction with the alienation of post-modern life and lead to more political and progressive attitudes. As argued by Lanier, “it is the challenge of popular Shakespearian performance to take up that potential, to prompt that imagined community within the Globe to engage the myriad inequities of the globe beyond its walls” (167).
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Stamford Shakespeare Festival: http://www.stamfordshakespeare.co.uk/
Stratford Festival of Canada: http://www.stratfordfestival.ca
Summer Shakespeare Festival: http://www.shakespeare.cz/en/welcome-to-summer---shakespeare-festival-2011/1
Texas Shakespeare Festival: http://www.texasshakespeare.com
The Alabama Shakespeare Festival: http://www.asf.net/index.aspx
The Cleveland Shakespeare Festival: http://www.cleveshakes.org
The Elm Shakespeare Company: http://elmshakespeare.org
The New American Shakespeare Tavern: http://www.shakespearetavern.com
The Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival: http://www.pashakespeare.org
The San Francisco Shakespeare Festival: http://www.sfshakes.org/
The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey: http://www.shakespearenj.org
UNESCO. Acesso à cultura no Brasil. (?) Available at: http://www.unesco.org/new/pt/brasilia/culture/access-to-culture/.
Utah Shakespearean Festival: http://bard.org/
Virginia Shakespeare Festival: http://www.wm.edu
Wikipedia - Português.
Woman’s Will: http://www.womanswill.org
## APPENDIX 1: SURVEY

### What is your gender?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 97

### What is your current age?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 29</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 to 49</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 or older</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 96

### What is the highest level of education you have completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Degree (BA, BS)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 96

### What is your annual gross household income?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – $50,000</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 – $100,000</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 – $150,000</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000 and above</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 89

### Are you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-teaching staff</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 99

If teaching staff, do you teach:

---

142 Conducted at *Geelong Grammar School*, Australia, in December 2011.
### Response Chart Frequency Count

#### Humanities
- English/Literature: 39% (17 responses)
- LOTE: 25% (11 responses)
- History: 20% (9 responses)
- Geography: 16% (7 responses)
- Music: 7% (3 responses)
- Drama: 5% (2 responses)
- Art: 2% (1 response)
- TOK: 2% (1 response)
- VCD: 0% (0 responses)
- Other: 32% (14 responses)

#### Non-humanities
- Total responses: 60

If Humanities, what subject?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English/Literature</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOK</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How do you feel about Shakespeare in general?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overrated</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrigued</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detest</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 44

### How do you feel about reading Shakespeare's works?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For intellectuals</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninteresting to read</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;High brow&quot; literature</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful language</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insightful</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 99
### Response Chart Frequency Count

**Other** | | | 6% | 6  
**Total responses:** | | | 97

**How do you feel about watching theatrical performances of Shakespeare's works?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For intellectuals</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting only when live</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“High brow” literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful language</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetic</td>
<td></td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging</td>
<td></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insightful</td>
<td></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They help illuminate the text</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They bring the printed page alive</td>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easier to understand than the written text</td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total responses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How often do you go to the theatre?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5 times a year</td>
<td></td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 10 times a year</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a month</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total responses:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How many Shakespeare productions have you seen during your life time?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. 0-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. 3-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. 6-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. More than 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 0-2</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 3-5</td>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 6-10</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Response Chart Frequency Count

B. More than 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 97

### Which type of Shakespearean productions do you prefer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outdoors</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoors</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Globe</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 91

If you have chosen outdoors, why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheaper, therefore more democratic</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More fun</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More interactive</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility of having a picnic</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 18

If you have chosen indoors, why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More selective</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More comfortable</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better acoustics</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not weather dependent</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less crowded</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More intimate</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 45

Do you feel like you have been "trained" to think Shakespeare is an imperative part of school education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total responses: 86

Do you, in fact, believe that it is an imperative part of school education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><img src="#" alt="Chart" /></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

99
### Do you think an “ordinary” man like Shakespeare could have written such highly-regarded works?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total responses:</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Do you feel like there is such a thing as “high” and “low” culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total responses:</td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### If yes, where would you categorise Shakespeare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total responses:</td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2: PHOTOS GRUPO GALPÃO

Grupo Galpão at Praça do Papa. (Wikipedia)

The umbrella. Grupo Galpão. (Wikipedia)

Grupo Galpão at The Globe-to-Globe Festival, May 2012:
Photos by Livia Segurado Nunes.
APPENDIX 3: FESTIVALS TABLE

(See attached sheets)
APPENDIX 4: MINACK THEATRE

Minack Theatre. (www.mullion-cove.co.uk)
APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW – EDUARDO MOREIRA

1) How do you see, personally and with the group’s work, access to culture in Brazil?
- I think that access is very restrict, we have a mass culture production that is closely linked to the TV, a ‘massification’ which is very poor, it uses elements of Brazilian culture, but in a very poor, very simplified way. And I think it’s a problem, this access to quality culture. And Brazilian culture is very lively; it has this thing of the cultural mix, many elements of black culture, European, Indigenous. It is a cosmopolitan country in that sense; it seems to me that it is the case in England today as well. I find it interesting that this festival shows a bit how England can - I think, it is not something that I have fully formed an opinion about - but I think that it is one of the countries in Europe that has got more this mix of cultures, for example, more than France, which has the tricky thing with the Arabs, Muslims, a somewhat conflicted relationship. But Brazil has this naturally, Brazil is made up of Japanese, Lebanese, Italian, German, African, we have it naturally, we no longer need to build it. And I think it is a very strong element of Brazil. And I think it has to be valued, but that’s where, unfortunately, is the big problem in Brazil: education. We do not have quality education, I think it’s very much linked to a political relationship, the elites are not interested in the people becoming aware, in them knowing how to reclaim their rights. This is obviously associated with education.

2) Do you think there is a hierarchy between popular culture and high culture?
There is, of course, high culture is valued, popular culture is often seen as something very exotic, which is then acceptable for its exoticism and not the intrinsic value it has. I think Europeans themselves behave like that in relation to the rest of the world and especially to Brazil, they see all that we do as something exotic, it's funny, interesting, but nothing more than something exotic. I think there is this hierarchy of value.

143 Conducted at the Globe Theatre in London on 20/05/12.
3) And is that good? The group's work is in part to destroy this hierarchy a little, taking a symbol of high culture as Shakespeare and turning it into something accessible and popular?
- I think *O Galpao* has this characteristic, not only in this work as in others too, like Moliere, Chekhov, Gogol, taking classical authors and reworking them in a very Brazilian perspective and almost always popular.

4) How do you see the position of Shakespeare, all these years presenting Romeo and Juliet, has anything changed? Today Shakespeare became an industry, has it changed in recent years? Does he belong to popular culture classical, popular, a little of everything?
- I think he's a bit of everything. He managed to build works that, for example, were very suitable for cinema, appropriated by popular culture, erudite, academic... Of course, for example, in Brazil, also because of an issue of translation, Shakespeare remained fairly inaccessible, difficult. Of course he did not write in today’s popular English, he was a scholar in a way, he wrote in a cultivated language, but he was also extremely popular. Sometimes there is a great barrier in terms of translations, which somehow turned Shakespeare into something very scholarly, inaccessible, poetic. For example, when we started to work with Romeo and Juliet, we were advised by the work of great directors like Peter Brook, and the question was how could our bodies not say that poetry, but live it? It was a great challenge. And the way we found was through the body. Peter Brook was very important, when he made Midsummer Night’s Dream, using the trapeze; he said it was a physical way that he had found for the actors not to say, but to live Shakespeare’s poetry, which is something very difficult.

5) What do you see in the poorest population, in terms of reception, do you think a translation like Pennaforte’s, ancient and baroque, is a barrier, or does the audience understand well; or is that its function, for them to learn something erudite through a different angle?
- I think Brazil has a foot in that baroque thing, this thing kitsch; this production is very baroque. The fact of having used the translation of
Pennaforte makes sense within this baroque construction. Of course, everything has to be said very clearly, but besides being Baroque, it is the best translation of Romeo and Juliet until today. It is very intelligent, poetic, it goes deep in the Brazilian, in the Portuguese language... And with the addendum of the *Sertao Veredas*, created by Caca, it is very strong, in Rosa’s style, a prosody *mineira*, it helps a lot.

6) Do you believe that understanding Shakespeare is not connected to a matter of level of education, but an access issue; not because it is difficult in itself, but dependent on how it is presented and the access to performance?
- I think we're always on the edge: how to maintain fidelity to the work, which is important, while having the ability to communicate with a more contemporary audience, how to make that bridge from something written in the 16th century, 17th to the public today? But that’s another thing I find interesting related to what Peter Brook said, that in today’s world, the place that can better reproduce the atmosphere of the Elizabethan theatre, is the street.

7) And what is the social role of street theatre?
- It has great importance to tell people that leisure, culture, is an element as important as education, health, well being; people need the ability to dream. It is very important that people see it, and that art go to the street, that it is not enclosed in these playhouses, which are expensive, where people do not feel empowered, that it is not their place. Here in Europe, this problem is much smaller. In Brazil, they think that the theatre is not their place.

8) What about today? Because in the beginning, for the company, street theatre was very important and over time the group went through phases of development of other languages, with performances in conventional theatre as well. Even inside the auditorium, are these street features part of the base of the show?
- It is very important, by the way, the next show we are producing is the “Giant Mountain” by Pirandello, and it will be a version for the street, directed by Gabriel Villela.
9) How important is *Romeu e Julieta* for the company's history?
- It is the most important show of the company's history. These two shows were with Gabriel Villela ("Romeo and Juliet" and "Street of Bitterness"), who focused on this thing of popular culture, as the issue of religion, so important in Brazil, so tied to Minas, a state that is very religious.

10) And for the population, is it important, even if they do not realize it, to recognize themselves in art?
- Certainly. With this show I see this a lot, when you trigger something in the collective unconscious of the people, for example, with music, folk songs, the serenades, the music of Brazil’s *belle époque*, that trigger something that is deep in the heart of people, is part of the character of a people. Even if the younger ones do not know them, had no direct contact, it was through parents, grandparents, tradition; it touches something very deep in their culture, which sometimes people do not realize.

11) Has this got to do with a nostalgic feeling in our society today, returning to a time when things were simpler, communal - when a show like this brings back that feeling?
- Yes, it's a show that touches the question of ancestry, we live in a time when the need for the new is so striking that people at the same time, need to find something visceral, ancestral.

12) The title of the DVD, "Shakespeare for the English to see", what is the explanation?
- It's a game by Paulo José who filmed and directed the DVD, as he explains at the beginning, the game with the 'uai' from Minas Gerais and the English 'why'.

13) What do you see as changes from the debut in 1992, to 2000 for the first time at the Globe, and now in 2012, back here?
- I see that the show is still doing very well. In this new version, working with Francesca, our Italian vocal coach, she says that she feels in the actors
a nostalgia for the future that is not accomplished in Romeo and Juliet, but in this re-production of the play, she feels a nostalgia for the past in the actors’ bodies, for a past that never returns, actors who are now at their 50-something that come with a nostalgia for a past that is gone. The contrast of these two nostalgias is very interesting and I think it is present in this new re-production of the play.

14) What do you see as differences in the reception from the public here, in other European countries and in Brazil?
- Here, England is a special country in this particular sense because, in my humble experience, is the country that has most respect for the artist and especially the theatre. They have an obsession, love, respect for the theatre that is really beautiful, the way they respect it, standing for hours, watching in silence, in the rain. I think no other people in the world have such reverence for the theatre as the English do. Now, of course in Brazil, you will hit the street, it is a much messier, more heterogeneous, dispersed, there is a disrespect, but that is also respectful, a more lively audience, who do not exactly know the conventions of theatre, but who are also touched by the theatre, without having asked to be there. And it happens in a very vital way when you do not know the conventions and you suddenly enter the theatre and become part of the game. Of course it is much more disorganized, but it is also good. But Europe in general has a different level of attention to culture, respect, and knowledge; it is very different.

15) Is there a very big difference between Romeu e Julieta in the theatre with an audience different from the street?
- Much less participation when we're on stage, there is much more an aesthetic contemplation, and in the street it is a much more effective participation.

16) Do you have a preference? Stage or street?
- No, I think things are very different but very lively, interesting.
17) What is the importance of being invited to the Globe and be considered as a production that captures the original Shakespeare, with a popular show, of the street, close to the audience?
- It really shows the importance of this production, with an incredible strength and vitality, as the British said, an absolute fidelity in its infidelity, recovering the popular spirit of Shakespeare, which is more difficult for them, I think they are less able to take liberties with the work.

18) Why?
- I do not know, I think because they recite Shakespeare since the age of five, they were traumatized at school… We have less training in this sense, no one has studied Shakespeare at school in Brazil, we take Shakespeare in a more … (interview interrupted)

19) What is the importance of festivals in popularizing the arts in general? Is it a way of bringing art to the streets, or a way for the government of locking up, institutionalizing something that you tried to deinstitutionalize?
- No, I think festivals are very important in training, for the contact between artists, this exchange of information - you see groups from other countries, you learn a lot. For me it was amazing to see the performances of others here at the Globe, I saw Serbia, Belarus; you see Shakespeare, but you see the spirit of that people, it is different, even without understanding anything, I think it's a great legacy as an exchange, training, and as popularization, bringing art to the street, to the theatre, calling people to watch.

20) And the Romeo and Juliet you do, is it a comic tragedy or a tragic comedy?
- A comic tragedy, this future which is not accomplished, it is absolutely tragic, but of course it is ornamented by a series of comic elements, which is something Shakespeare did very well, always mixing a comic scene with a tragic scene, he knew how to play with the audience attention very well.

21) Is the comic element that brings people together?
- Yeah, and also gives emphasis to the tragic, this variation creates highlights, an interesting musicality.

22) Without the comedic elements, can you tell a tragedy?
- In the case of Shakespeare, no. In the case of Greek tragedy, yes. I’ve never done it, but I would love to do one in the street, it would be lovely. But Shakespeare always has this mixture, all his works, as in Hamlet, have many funny scenes, there is always humour.

23) Why Shakespeare? An intentional choice as a symbol of high culture, or because of the strength of the story?
- There is this aspect, but also it is the fact of being the most famous love story in the world. Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist. I love Molière, but as Ariane Mnouchkine\textsuperscript{144} once said, "Molière is in the realm of men, Shakespeare is in the realm of the gods."

\textsuperscript{144} (1939- ) Renowned French director, founder of the Théâtre Du Soleil.
APPENDIX 6: FREVO

Frevo Dance. (www.essiailleurs.eklablog.com)
APPENDIX 7 : BAROQUE ‘MINEIRO’

St Francis d’Assisi. Ouro Preto (www.entretenimento.com.br)
APPENDIX 8: DVD – ROMEU E JULIETA AT THE GLOBE
ATTACHED SHEETS