

GRUPO GALPÃO'S A RUA DA AMARGURA
The script, the stage and the screen

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In this production the spectators will watch the highest display of the *mambembe* artist's emotion. I hope that they will experience the thrill of communing with the mystery of representation that lies behind the theatre and the sacred. I hope they will take along the sense of faith and belief in this craftsmanship, that they will perceive the beauty and exuberance of the actor. Since this is a spectacle about church myth, I would like the public to see us as mere storytellers, as a factory of dreams, because, when dreaming, we are all one and the same.¹

Gabriel Villela. *Why you must see my play*. Veja Rio, Sept. 21, 1994.

A rua da amargura:² 14 passos lacrimosos sobre a vida de Jesus Cristo, Grupo Galpão's transrepresentation³ of Eduardo Garrido's circus-theatre play *O Mártir do Calvário* (1902), premiered in Rio de Janeiro on August 26, 1994, at the Centro Cultural do Banco do Brasil (CCBB) to a packed house that included such

luminaries from the entertainment and theatre world as Maria Bethânia, Wagner Tiso, Lília Cabral, Xuxa Lopes, Luciana Braga, Jorge Fernando, Cássia Kiss, Leonardo Vieira, and Renata Sorrah. As the play concluded with Handel's *Hallelujah* chorus, the audience rose to their feet and brought the actors back for three curtain calls. Critics were similarly enthusiastic, not only in Rio but in Galpão's home city of Belo Horizonte, where the show opened a few months later.⁴ After *Rua* was named best show of the year in Rio, the players toured with their production throughout Brazil and Latin America and subsequently presented it in several European countries.⁵ In April 2001 the production was adapted for television as *A paixão segundo Ouro Preto*, initiating Rede Globo's Sexta-Super series.

In 1994 this play may have seemed, at first glance, to be a rather curious departure for the actors of Galpão who, ever since the troop's inception in 1982, had focused primarily on improvising short comic sketches in the streets and squares of Belo Horizonte and the towns in Minas Gerais, Brazil.⁶ Their 1992 production, *Romeu e Julieta*, brought them many awards and international invitations;⁷ however, personal tragedy followed hard on the heels of professional triumph. In March 1994 a car accident took the life of founding member Wanda Fernandes, originator of the role of Juliet and wife of founding member Eduardo Moreira, the company's Romeo. Devastated, the actors at first wanted to disband but later reconsidered. New members were brought in, and the group moved to a remodeled *galpão*,⁸ which would serve as headquarters for the next phase of their work in Belo Horizonte (Brandão 122).

In light of these circumstances, then, *A rua da amargura*, which focuses on the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, was a particularly appropriate choice for the group at that point in their trajectory, as it came to symbolize the actors' sufferings, devastation, and rebirth as a reconstituted group. However, the play was a logical option for other reasons as well. *Rua* gave Grupo Galpão and *Mineiro*⁹ director Gabriel Villela the opportunity to work together on two common goals: to put on stage the richness and eclecticism of *Mineira* culture and to immerse themselves in the interpretative universe of circus-theatre

melodrama (Brandão 122). For many years, these two objectives have been implicit in an overall aesthetic shared by director and company, which privileges the blending of popular culture and classic texts to create a dramatic language that is accessible to the general public. Their 1994 collaboration, therefore, was syncretic in a uniquely Brazilian way, characteristic of the anthropophagic theatre practice that has marked Galpão's best shows.

This anthropophagic and syncretic approach guided director Villela and the actors of Galpão as they developed *A rua da amargura*, a circus-theatre show that celebrates *barroco mineiro*. While elements of both circus-theatre and *Mineira* culture are less evident in the half-hour show, *A paixão segundo Ouro Preto*, which Villela and Galpão adapted for TV Globo in March 2001 to celebrate Easter, the television version is not incompatible with their aesthetic ideals and goals.

The first goal of these productions was to recuperate the culture of Minas Gerais, especially the folklore of the *Folia de Reis*¹⁰ prevalent in the Carmo do Rio Claro region, where Villela was born (Brandão 122). It would be the director's *Mineira* version of Jesus' life. Under his supervision, Grupo Galpão fused Catholicism, *mineiridade*,¹¹ and circus elements in their adaptation of Garrido's play to make *A rua da amargura* a uniquely Mineiro/Brazilian experience; but this mixing of Christian tradition with other religious or secular rituals mirrors the syncretism of the national identity, which is neither new nor original in the Brazilian theatre.

In the 1970s, the polemical author Plínio Marcos,¹² himself a former clown, had made a point of using circus language as he staged his plays, and of putting *candomblé* or *umbanda*¹³ on stage, in his production of *Balbina de Iansã*. In December 1980 he mounted the musical *Jesus-homem*, in which he blended samba, sacred, and folk music with traditional theatre and popular culture, as he rendered his contemporary vision of the story of a Christ who has both the qualities of a modern Macunaíma¹⁴ and of the great religious leader. The spectacle, an incursion through the fields of lyricism, seemed to stimulate the religiosity of the spectator, but not the passive feeling of mystical anguish. In the play, Jesus is depicted as a revolutionary who questions and

attacks social hypocrisy. The mixture of symbols, allegories and myths would help to construct the national ideal as an intricate mosaic with both symmetric and discordant images through the different groups, classes and institutions represented themselves (Guzik 7-8).

In the first part of the 20th century, the *umbanda* rite was considered essentially subversive by the Catholic Church, which did not want to lose its priority in the Brazilian society. In the 1920s, some young intellectual writers incredulous of both the spiritual and lay national realities started a vanguard movement defending not only religious but also literary, ethnic and social syncretism as a distinctive mark of the country's identity. Among them was Oswald de Andrade¹⁵ with his theory of anthropophagic representation as an instrument able to devour and digest the existing differences to create a new and syncretic civilization. After the Second World War, even though Catholicism carried on its attack against African Brazilian rituals, it could not totally succeed, because it had been gradually losing the governmental alliance which characterized the theocracy of the early republic. The Church considered them transgressive, anti-Christian, and demoniac cults, which would precipitate the Brazilian society into hell, and defended the superiority of the Roman Catholic Eurocentric elite. This reaction was not merely rhetorical. In the 1950s, the Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB) created the "Secretariado Nacional da Defesa da Fé" in order to recuperate a Christianity which had been paganized by other religious practices and to preserve orthodoxy (*Isaía* 1749-58).

By contrast, Eduardo Garrido,¹⁶ a Portuguese-born resident of Rio, included little of this Brazilian issue in *O Mártir do Calvário*, the source-play for the transrepresentation of *A rua da amargura* into *Mineiro* mood. His composition, divided into five acts and sixteen *quadros* (subdivisions of acts), with a number of short scenes in each *quadro*, offers episodes depicting Jesus admonishing the Samaritan woman at the well, saying farewell to his mother, and befriending the repentant Mary Magdalene before portraying his entry into Jerusalem, his betrayal by Judas, the Last Supper, the Stations of the Cross, the Messiah's death and his resurrection. Most of the music is religious, and the text,

written for the most part in verse, adheres closely to its Biblical source. Written in 1902 in melodramatic circus-style and mounted about a hundred times during the past century, mostly in small towns in the interior of Brazil, the play "has brilliant moments of bad poetry," as stated by adapter Arildo de Barros (July 19, 2001).

The fact that virtually everyone who saw the 1994 adaptation of Garrido's play agreed that it was Galpão at its best is due in part to a key component of the company's aesthetic, which Villela terms "the marriage of the popular and the erudite" (Vianna 15). Just as they had done with *Romeo and Juliet* and would do a few years later with Moliere's *Le malade imaginaire* and Calvino's *Il visconte dimezzato*, the members of Grupo Galpão took a classic text and gave it new direction and vitality by re-interpreting it from a Brazilian point of view, the Shakespeare *ao molho pardo*¹⁷ approach, as one critic termed it.

This approach has been a hallmark of Brazilian theatre practice since the sixteenth century, when the Jesuit priest José de Anchieta wrote his didactic plays to catechise the Indians, combining Spanish, Portuguese, and Tupi,¹⁸ and placing Roman emperors and European saints in Amerindian villages (Wasserman 73-5). Arguably, modern Brazilian theatre began with this kind of play in 1933, when Oswald de Andrade re-wrote Alfred Jarry's¹⁹ *Ubu roi* (1896) as *O rei da vela*, setting it in Rio and São Paulo during the coffee crisis of the 1930s, and infusing it with parodies of several worn-out Brazilian theatre forms and with social criticism of the country's corrupt version of capitalism (George 79-80). The theory behind this kind of performance is found in Oswald's *Manifesto antropófago* (1928), a foundational document of Brazilian Modernism which asserts that modern Brazilian artists can come into their own only by ceasing to slavishly imitate European art forms. Instead, they must imitate their Tupi forebears by cannibalizing the works that threaten to colonize their culture and mixing them with native elements, thus producing art that is uniquely Brazilian (*Manifesto antropófago*, 7).

In marrying elements of Brazilian, often specifically *Mineira* popular culture to the most powerful myth of western civilization in *A rua da amargura*, Grupo Galpão engaged in the

kind of anthropophagic craftsmanship that Oswald de Andrade was advocating and practicing. This process can clearly be seen in a number of changes that Galpão made to Garrido's play.

The first major change was the addition, at the beginning of the show, of a twenty-minute Nativity playlet that incorporates *folias*. In Minas Gerais, the *Folia de Reis* occurs during the Christmas season. To research these rituals, Villela went to the Carmo do Rio Claro region to tape A Companhia do Menino Jesus, a group of men of all ethnicities who parade through the streets singing and dancing and asking for alms for the feast of the Kings, carrying banners and beating drums (de Barros, July 18, 2001). This folk tradition has a long history, as seen in the description provided by Sir Richard Francis Burton when he visited Minas Gerais in the 1860s:

Once the Negroes showed us what in Hindustan is called "*tamasha*," in Spain and Portugal a "*folia*," in Egypt and Morocco a "*fantasiyah*," and here a "*Congáda*" or Congo-ry. A score of men, after promenading through the settlement, came to the *casa grande*. They were dressed, as they fondly imagined, after the style of the Água-Rosada house, descended from the great Manikongo and hereditary lords of Congo land. But the toilettes, though gorgeous with coloured silks and satins, were purely fanciful, and some wore the *Kanitar* or plumed headgear, and the *Arasvia* or waist fringe, and carried the *Tacape* or tomahawk belonging to the red man. (132-3).

Villela's research is reflected both in the costumes and in the score of the show, particularly in the opening segment. The sound track is punctuated by folk, popular and liturgical songs, and by Gregorian chant (all played and sung by the actors themselves). The Nativity playlet that introduces the mainstream of the show starts with a group of dancers dressed in colorful costumes, who represent a procession as they also sing the following songs:

I – Hallelujah (G.F. Handel – adapted by Ernani Maletta)

Aleluia! (ten times)

Pois o Senhor Onipotente reina.

Aleluia! (four times)

Pois o Senhor Onipotente reina.
Aleluia! (four times)
E Ele reinará para sempre.
Para sempre e sempre. (twice)
Aleluia! (five times)

II – *Romã-romã* (Antônio Madureira, Ronaldo de Brito e F.A. de Souza Lima)

Pã-parararurá (four times), pararurá, romã-romã.
Quem aqui trouxe primeiro, romã-romã,
Uma pedra bem branquinha, romã-romã,
Quem achar naquela areia, romaninha-romaninha,
Conchas de água marinha, romã-romã,
Tragam depressa correndo, romã-romã,
A pena de uma rolinha, romã-romã,
Tragam na palma da mão, romaninha-romaninha,
Uma folha bem sequinha, romaninha-romaninha.
Pã-parararurá, pararurá, romã-romã.

III – *Canção de apresentação (Folia de Reis – Companhia do Menino Jesus)*
Na chegada desta praça (folklore from Carmo do Rio Claro region)

Na chegada desta praça, chegamos com alegria,
Aqui está o Menino Deus, Filho da Virgem Maria! (four times)
Oh! Se dela não nascesse, ai de nós o que seria! (twice)
Vinde contentes pastores, para o nosso Deus cantemos em lou-
vores. (twice)
Cantemos em louvores ao nosso Deus.
Tenhamos amores que somos filhos Teus. (twice)

IV – *Os sinos de Belém* (from *Jingle bells*)

Bate o sino pequenino, sino de Belém.
Já nasceu o Deus Menino para o nosso bem.
Paz na terra, pede o sino alegre a cantar,
Abençoe, Deus menino, este nosso lar.
Hoje a noite é bela, juntos eu e ela, vamos à capela, felizes a rezar.
Ao soar o sino, sino pequenino, vai o Deus Menino nos abençoar.

V – *Adeste fidelis* (anonymous – adapted by Ernani Maletta)

Adeste fidelis, laeti triumphantes
Venite, venite ad Bethlehem.
Natum videte regem angelorum.
Venite adoremus (three times) Dominum.

VI – *Choir (Folia de Reis): Pastorinhas de Belém* (folklore from Carmo do Rio Claro region)

Pastorinhas de Belém vão colher as belas flores,
Para ornar o altar do Divino Salvador (twice).
Lá no prado as ovelhas bem contentes vão pastar.
Lá se encontra Deus nascido, para o mundo resgatar (twice).

VII – *Choir: Xote dos anjos* (folklore from Carmo do Rio Claro region – adapted by Fernando Muzzi)

Lá se vai a maravilha, espalhando alegria.
Lá no céu estão cantando, com paixão e com ternura.
Teus anjos que estão cantando lá no céu, cantam com ternura.
São os anjos que cantam a glória de Maria Virgem pura,
de Maria Virgem pura. (three times)

VIII – *José* (by Georges Mustaki – Nara Leão's version)

Ô... olhe que foi meu bom José se apaixonar pela donzela,
Dentre todas a mais bela em toda a sua Galiléia.
Casar com Débora ou com Sara, meu bom José, você podia,
E nada disso acontecia, mas você foi amar Maria.
Você podia simplesmente ser carpinteiro e trabalhar,
Sem nunca ter de se exilar e se esconder com Maria.
Meu bom José, você podia ter muitos filhos com Maria
E seu ofício ensinar como seu pai sempre fazia.
Porque será, meu bom José, que esse seu pobre filho um dia,
Andou com estranhas idéias que fizeram chorar Maria.
Me lembro às vezes de você, meu bom José, meu pobre amigo
Que nessa vida só queria ser feliz com sua Maria. (twice)

IX – *The end* (all together)

Adeus, ó gente boa, devotos de São José.
Adeus até p'ro ano, para o ano se Deus quiser (twice)

According to Arildo de Barros (July 19, 2001), the criteria Villela and the group chose to select these songs were: first, sonorous beauty and lyricism, which would produce the emotional effect they had intended to cause in the spectator; and second, the blending of the popular and the erudite qualities, which, in turn, they expected would please both the critics and the public. Of the quotations mentioned above, Handel's *Hallelujah* chorus, for example, imprints on the play the tone of epiphany, proper to commemorate the manifestation of Christ

to the gentiles in the persons of the Magi. *Romã-romã*, a children's song, adds to its popular, secular and sometimes naïve flavor. *Na chegada desta praça*, *Pastorinhas de Belém* and *Xote dos anjos* represent the religious folklore of Carmo do Rio Claro; this latter class of song, which is now totally embedded in the Brazilian Christmas season tradition, was imported from Portugal. *Adeste fideles* stands for the far away, the old, the Latin inheritance, the erudite. *Os sinos de Belém*, in turn, is an anthropophagic appropriation of the tune *Jingle Bells* to accommodate the words that would befit the country's romantic religious imagination. José, originally a French song, is a lyric and modern approach to Saint Joseph's fate as he willingly accepts the mission to accompany and protect Maria and her divine son. For the second part of the play the following songs were selected: *Queremos Deus*, *Pecador agora é tempo*, *Coração santo*, and *Canto da via sacra* (church chants in the public domain); *O beija-flor e a borboleta* by Antônio J. Madureira, Ronaldo C. de Brito and F. Assis de Souza Lima and *Lua*, by Mabel Veloso and Roberto Mendes (songs of Brazilian popular repertoire) and *Canto da samaritana*, Eduardo Garrido's hauntingly seductive melody, which stands in contrast to the sacred music *Panis angelicus*, by César Frank. There are also recorded themes from American westerns such as *Bonanza* and *The magnificent seven*, as well as that of *Hawaii 5-O*. The latter three were intended to render an epic mood to the play (de Barros, July 19, 2001).

Galpão has imprinted its mark in the Nativity playlet in other ways as well. The Christ child is portrayed by a very short adult actor who physically suggests the blend of Indian, African, and European ethnicities inherent in the Brazilian national identity. His appearance, as Plínio Marcos's Jesus had done in the past, calls to mind Mário de Andrade's tri-cultural anti-hero Macunaíma. Two of the three kings who bring him gifts speak with *Mineiro* accents. The triangular structure made of straw that frames the stage in this segment of the play has reminded many reviewers of Belo Horizonte's Presépio do Pipiripau.²⁰ However, Barros stated that – although the actors visited the Pipiripau as part of their research for the play – their intention was to suggest its simplicity and purity of spirit, close to the popular mood, rather than to render its photographic

likeness. (Telephone interview, July 18, 2001). Moreover, this triangular frame, as well as the mouth of the stage, displays *ex-votos* inspired by Congonhas churches.²¹

The play thus poses a Catholic-historical vision of Christ's birth and passion as interpreted by *mambembe*²² actors. On stage their distinctive trait is visual and sonorous beauty. The costumes and make-up contribute much to the former target. Designed by Maria Castilho and Wanda Sgarbi, and handwoven and dyed in Carmo do Rio Claro under the supervision of Villela, the costumes were the result of a year's research on the folk traditions of Minas Gerais (Ventura). A few outfits, such as the one worn by Jesus, were purposely monochromatic and plain, possibly aiming at reminding the audience of the texture and style of the clothes that were supposedly used by Christ and His disciples. Others were strikingly original and some observers have considered them "kind of kitsch" in their over-colored and richly baroque details.

The term "baroque" brings to mind an abundance of gold, twisted columns, an excess and extravagance characteristic of seventeenth and eighteenth century art. It is a luxuriously ornamented and polyphonic style. In the strict sense, the baroque is an artistic and literary phenomenon closely linked to the Counter Reformation and which seems to be reinforced by the fact that its greatest development took place in Catholic countries, such as Portugal and consequently colonial Brazil. The baroque style is thus a spiritual reaction against the Renaissance impregnated by rationalism. The term "baroque" also usually evokes a mixture of genres, ruptures, and often incoherence and illusion, when many barriers fall, and the arts – theatre, circus, dance and music – fuse, as it so happens in *A rua da amargura*. The play, in both its stage and screen versions, presents baroque traits which, as Villela had planned, involve the audience with religiosity and emotion. The mixture of sensuality and religion is very strong in both productions as they show the passion of a semi-nude, handsome and tortured Christ on his way to Calvary. Also, the stage lighting marks the cutting and abrupt frontier between light and shadow, the chiaroscuro technique used in the spectacle to establish the limits between

good and evil. In the TV adaptation, Jesus' *Via Crucis*, for instance, is shown during the day and under the sun light, whereas Judas's death, one of the highest scenes of the play, takes place in the darkness of the night. Both the stage and screen productions of the passion scenes, sometimes dynamic, other times static are clearly mounted, reminiscent of well-known works of the Mineiro baroque, most of them by Aleijadinho.²³ The actors' faces, studded with sequins, often in a way that suggests tears, put the viewer in mind of the art found in colonial churches. Eduardo Moreira looks for all the world like a baroque statue of Christ, with blood-like make-up streaking down his face and body. In the TV Globo version, the Roman soldiers who capture Christ are wearing masks that resemble those worn in Aleijadinho's reproduction of Maichus, a servant to the high priest, whose ear was cut off by Peter, a work of sculpture that is part of the church complex in Congonhas do Campo (Pianzola 13, 34, 51, 72, 78, 83, 149, 159, and *Brésil baroque* 245, figure 74).

Grupo Galpão complicated their anthropophagic staging of the Nativity and Passion of Christ with yet another Brazilian tradition: circus-theatre.²⁴ David George emphasizes the prevalence of this tradition in modern productions, noting that Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade saw the circus as one of the authentic elements of the national culture that should be married to European models to produce anthropophagic works of theatre that would be uniquely Brazilian (George 5). This theory informed a number of modern national spectacles that incorporated circus elements, such as Teatro de Arena's *Uma mulher e três palhaços* (1954) and *A escola de maridos* (1956). Most notably, Teatro Oficina's landmark staging of Oswald de Andrade's *O rei da vela* (1967) featured one of the male leads wearing a lion tamer's costume, debtors imprisoned in a structure that resembled a circus cage for ferocious beasts, and clown skits, all of which carried thematic weight, suggesting "the buffoonery of the nation's capitalistic system" (quoted in George 87). In 1975, the company Asdrúbal Trouxe o Trombone staged Alfred Jarry's *Ubu roi* using circus techniques and a few years later also gave circus-style shows in a tent on Ipanema beach (George 110).

A major objective of both director and actors was to pay homage to the circus-theatre companies that traveled throughout Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s (Brandão 122). This objective was consistent with Galpão's past theatre practice; the players had been incorporating clown make-up, stilt-walking, juggling, and other circus arts since their first production in 1982 (Bara, July 24, 2001); indeed, their mission statement concludes with the following sentence: "The group has opted for a more circus-like [theatre] language in which stilt-walking constitutes a fundamental instrument and very strong magic element within the spectacle" (Moreira et al.).

Gabriel Villela had also been researching about circus and theatre. In 1989, before his fortuitous meeting with the actors of Grupo Galpão, he had directed Romero de Andrade Lima's play *Vem buscar-me que ainda sou teu*, in which he used circensian techniques (Moreira July 24, 2001). Galpão's *Romeu e Julieta*, which immediately preceded *A rua da amargura*, also contained many circensial elements, most significantly, some tightrope-walking by Romeo that adroitly conveyed the main theme of the production: life is always hanging in the balance. Both plays were directed by Villela, who told a reporter in 1992 that "Circus-theatre, the Catholic Church, and the *Mineiro* cultural imaginary guide the aesthetic energy of my stagings" and credited his Catholic education for his understanding and love of ritual, for him an essential aspect of his productions (Magioli Second section, 1). Villela's childhood in Carmo do Rio Claro furnished him as well with both his reverence for *Mineira* culture and his lifelong passion for the circus.²⁵ While preparing to become a director at the State University of São Paulo, he also studied trapeze, whip-handling, acrobatics, and juggling at the Escola de Circo Picadeiro. "In the circus ring, man tests all his physical limits," stated Villela, explaining part of the fascination the circus holds for him ("A magia do picadeiro" 7).

In *A rua da amargura* and in *A paixão segundo Ouro Preto* Gabriel Villela and Grupo Galpão maintained the circus-theatre genre, a safe and well-known ground to them, but they eliminated the stilt-walking, acrobatics and many other circus arts that they had been using before. As the director put it, "We have

abandoned the circus ring, but we're still under the tent" (Honor). The archetype and the structure of the original melodrama were preserved: Christ is the hero, and Judas, dressed and made up as a clown, is the villain – the same old struggle between good and evil, virtue and vice, even though the Manichaeism of one of the best known plots in the world has been softened in that a more human and penitent Judas is portrayed. In the scene where Christ defends Mary Magdalene from her attackers, he uses a colorful circus-style umbrella to deflect the tennis balls that represent stones; such umbrellas appear in other scenes as well. Before his jeremiad on Jerusalem, Jesus opens a small case he has been carrying, which suggests the make-up kit of a clown or the suitcase of a traveling circus performer; a shining miniature replica of the city of Jerusalem then pops up, much as it might in a circus magician's act. In the stage as well as in the TV version, the upper portion of most of the actors' faces (Moreira excepted) were in clown make-up.

As might be expected, Grupo Galpão had much less control over *A paixão segundo Ouro Preto* than it had over *A rua da amargura* (Barros, July 19, 2001). Additional cuts had to be made to produce a show that would fit into Rede Globo's half-hour time slot. Garrido's sixteen *quadros* were reduced to seven. The Nativity scene opens the TV spectacle, as it did Galpão's production, and the same actors appear, wearing their original costumes and make-up and playing their original instruments. Four major modifications differentiate this Nativity playlet from the stage version. The first change was to shorten the segment by eliminating all of the *Mineiro* folksongs. Only "Romã, romã," "Os sinos de Belém," and "José" remained. Secondly, actor Antônio Edson, the enchanting multicultural Baby Jesus of the 1994 production, was replaced by a light-haired four-year-old white male professional actor.²⁶ This change, as well as the dropping of the regional folk songs, attenuated the *Mineiro* character of the production; however, the decision to set the entire play in Ouro Preto²⁷ somewhat recuperated it. As the shepherds and wise men dance in the square in front of the church of São Francisco de Assis, Mary and Joseph learn of Herod's nefarious plans for baby boys and they are urged to flee to Egypt, not by an angel, as in Galpão's original adapta-

tion, but by a narrator, played by a famous Globo actor, Paulo José, taking the role of a retired circus clown, who appears recurrently throughout the play, sometimes participating directly in the action and sometimes commenting on it as he addresses the audience. The speeches attributed to this storyteller were written by Geraldo Carneiro.

Some changes in the second part of the show, like the inclusion of the narrator who talks to the spectators, appeared to be efforts to involve a television audience that might otherwise not be drawn into the spectacle as readily as were the viewers of the live production, who became immediately engaged by the delightful Adult-Baby Jesus that threw flowers to the crowd, waved at the audience and pretended to conduct the musicians as they played and sang. Temporalities are mixed as the high priests Annas and Caiphas shoot pool while discussing the subversive nature of Christ's actions, and Mary Magdalene appears in black toreador pants and high-heeled red sandals. Pilate's maid, to whom Peter denies Jesus three times, has become a Brazilian matron in a fur coat and sun glasses who speaks with a *carioca*²⁸ accent, but who also reminded some *Mineiro* spectators of Dona Olimpia Cota, a traditional figure of the streets of Ouro Preto, famous for her singularity and extravagance. The cock that crows after Peter's denials is a colorful hand puppet.

The shortened second part of the TV show focuses even more tightly on the passion and death of Christ. The scene between the Lord and the Samaritan woman, a stand-out in the stage version largely due to the seductiveness of actress Bia Braga's characterization, is gone, as is the farewell scene between Jesus and his mother as he leaves to travel with his apostles. Brief clips of Christ's preaching and teaching are intercut with Annas and Caiphas's game of pool; the same technique is used to juxtapose Judas's despair and suicide with Jesus' agony on the cross. As in the Nativity playlet, a number of songs were cut; overall, only eight of the original seventeen musical numbers of *A rua da amargura* were used in the Globo presentation. The TV musical score resembles that of the play, a mixture of Gregorian chant, Catholic hymns and Brazilian

popular music. The decision to emphasize the latter and exclude the *Mineiro* folk music appeared to be another strategy to engage the contemporary TV viewer, equipped with little more than a remote control device, a short attention span and an intolerance for the unfamiliar.

The highest point of the Globo production was the choice of setting. Using key locations in Ouro Preto was tremendously effective in complementing the mixture of the sacred and the secular that was the hallmark of Galpão's earlier effort, as well as complicating the mixture of temporalities by juxtaposing the *Mineiro* colonial past with the past of Biblical times and with present-day Brazil. Jesus' jeremiad on Jerusalem was shot at night, backlit with a view of a baroque church high on a hill. Perched in the quatrefoil window of Ouro Preto's colonial theater, Judas laments Christ's partiality to Mary Magdalene. Most dramatic of all is the *Via Crucis*, in which Moreira carries the cross up a steep hill to the Church of Nossa Senhora do Carmo (Our Lady of Mount Carmel). Interestingly, a number of scenes are set in the city theater.²⁹ This foregrounding of representation, emphasized throughout by the narrator's asides to the audience, is echoed at the end of the play when Jesus, bearing a placard resembling a street sign that says "A Rua da Amargura," joins the narrator at the bottom of an Ouro Preto street. Overall, the production was innovative and effective, if not as engaging and moving as Galpão's stage play. Given the constraints of the television medium, it is difficult to imagine how it could have been.

Many viewers who were familiar with Galpão's previous work were not so charitable. When we asked a colleague if she had seen the TV Globo version of *Rua*, she ruefully nodded her head. "Did Globo ruin it?" we asked. "No," she replied. "But they did their best." This opinion may reflect a prejudice against Rede Globo, one of the biggest and most powerful television networks in the world, or a pre-conception that the TV version could not help but suffer in comparison to Galpão's previously staged production, particularly in the light of the superficial quality of some of TV Globo's regular programming. Jorge Fernando dos Passos seemed to reflect the latter feeling in

his review in *Estado de Minas*, concluding that *A paixão segundo Ouro Preto* left much to be desired. He stated that Galpão's first effort was much bolder and that the cuts which were made deprived the show of the power of the original piece. He also lamented the decision to replace Antônio Edson with a child actor, and criticized the substitution of narrator for dramatic action (dos Passos 7).

Even though *A rua da amargura* and *A paixão segundo Ouro Preto* point out issues related both to religion and to politics and power, they are "neither iconoclastic nor catechistical" as Villela had explained, just a historical vision interpreted by *mambembe* artists (Miranda 1994). The director stated that he was not concerned about the various versions of Christian philosophy and that his aims were to approximate the popular concept of Jesus' history and to bring emotion to both the street and stage audience, objectives he had previously accomplished with *Romeu e Julieta* (Ghivelder 1994).

It is true that the productions denounce oppression, as one would expect from any work dealing with the figure of Christ; nevertheless, it is clear from the spectacle that what most matters for the group and its director is not the story itself, but the form in which the story is told. Thus, in both the stage and screen versions of *Rua*, Grupo Galpão reverses the Aristotelian hierarchy of theatre elements, de-emphasizing character, plot and thought, and foregrounding diction, spectacle and music (Sousa 57). The circus elements and the Brazilian songs and dances make the two shows into vigorous and popular visions of Jesus' drama, and as the actors perform his passion, both spectacles intermingle songs and rituals, skillfully incorporating the Bible and the *folias*. Spontaneous religion, circus elements, music and dance amicably cohabit the same space without questioning one another's validity.

Galpão's transrepresentations of *O Mártir do Calvário*, also written, like the original, mostly in verse, are visually and sonorously very beautiful, both on the stage and on the screen – the media through which Garrido's circus-theatre script was post-modernly transformed into scenic art, and the loci where it once more found its natural habitat. Nevertheless stage and

screen performances, as has been discussed, present striking differences since their codes, conceptions and forms of expression are essentially different. Even though the mimetic aspects of a stage play and those of a television show are often similar, and even though they may be considered sister arts, they have specific objectives, play divergent roles, and most often are written for separate audiences. In their journey from script to stage and from stage to screen, Grupo Galpão once more succeeded in uniting the popular and the classic, an accomplishment that will stand with their *Romeu e Julieta* and *Um Moliere Imaginário* as one of the high points of their trajectory.

NOTES

¹ We have translated into English all quotations from reviews, statements from interviews, and critical commentaries that were originally in Portuguese.

² A rua da amargura (Street of bitterness) is a Brazilian expression that popularly refers to the Via crucis. We thank Maria dos Passos Ferreira for her help with our research on the Biblical foundation of Garrido's play.

³ Transrepresentation is a theoretical concept that describes the process of transmitting a work of art from one culture to another. The resulting text is not a literal rendering of the original; rather, it has become a new work of art that has taken on aspects of the receiving culture. See Viana and Alves.

⁴ See Armindo Blanco, "As cornetas do tetra no Calvário", *O Dia*, Section D, Aug/26, 1994, 10; Lionel Fischer, "Paixão, lágrimas e sorrisos", *Tribuna BIS*, Sept/6, 1994, 2; Marcello Castilho Avellar, "Grupo Galpão oferece um mergulho na poesia", *Estado de Minas*, n.p., n.d.; Bárbara Heliodora, "Uma delicadeza feérica", *O Globo*, 2, n.d.; Macksen Luiz, "Lágrimas de lantejoulas", *Jornal do Brasil*, Section B, 1, n.d. A dissenter was Nelson de Sá, who deplored the anti-Jewish stereotypes perpetuated by Garrido's text but felt that the overall effect of the production was not anti-Semitic (see "A rua da amargura" traz a festa e as trevas", *Folha de São Paulo*, section 5, Nov/14, 1994, 5). We thank Arildo de Barros for sharing his clippings.

⁵ In 1994, *A rua da amargura* was chosen best play of the year by *Jornal do Brasil* and also received four Mambembe awards for best direction, set design, costumes and lighting. The production also received the Shell, Sharp and Molière prizes that year. By 1998 the show had won more than twenty awards.

⁶ Grupo Galpão, as of this writing, has staged fourteen plays: *E a noiva não quer casar* (1982), *De olhos fechados* (1983), *O pro cô vê na ponta do pé* (1984), *Arlequim, servidor de tantos amores* (1985), *Triunfo, um delírio barroco* (1986), *A comédia da esposa muda* (1986), *Foi por amor* (1987), *Corra enquanto é tempo* (1988), *Álbum de família* (1990), *Romeu e Julieta* (1992), *A rua da amargura*

(1994), *Um Molière imaginário* (1997), *Partido* (1999), and *Um trem chamado desejo* (2000). In 1998, Grupo Galpão launched Oficina Galpão Cinc Horto (Oficina de Atores e de Dramaturgia do Grupo Galpão), a school for aspiring actors. This group produced *Noite de Reis* (1999), *Caixa postal 1500* (2000) and *Por toda minha vida* (2001).

⁷ By the year 2000, Grupo Galpão had performed *Romeu and Julieta* in more than 100 cities, including 27 international presentations, and had won 44 awards for this production in Brazil alone. The show was also named best play at the 1999 theatre festival in San Antonio, Texas. During the summer of 2000, Galpão mounted the show at the Globe Theatre in London, where British actress Vanessa Redgrave came backstage to congratulate the group on a very fine production.

⁸ "*Galpão*" is not easily translated. It may mean barn or shed, but a galpão is not necessarily an agricultural structure. Urban buildings with big open work spaces, like warehouses, such as the Grupo Galpão headquarters in Belo Horizonte, can also be considered *galpões*. The group chose the name in order to convey to its audience that it is a down-to-earth, user friendly, all-embracing company of actors rather than an elite troop that plays only for the two percent of the Brazilian public that regularly attend the theatre.

⁹ "*Mineiro*" refers to a native or inhabitant of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Its capital is Belo Horizonte, home to three million *Mineiros*. This mountainous region of Brazil, today largely agricultural, was the site of an eighteenth-century gold rush and also yielded diamonds and precious stones. Its rich cultural patrimony includes a number of churches in the colonial cities that exemplify baroque architecture and contain exquisite works of painting and sculpture.

¹⁰ *Folias* are religious folk rituals practiced all over Brazil in commemoration of various Catholic holy days. The *Folia de Reis*, commonly seen in towns in the interior of Minas Gerais, is a celebration of both the Nativity and the Feast of the Epiphany; it begins on Christmas Eve and it ends on January 6 or February 2. Late each night during this period, a group of fancifully costumed men parade through the streets, singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments in praise of the Birth of Christ, waking householders and asking for alms. The paraders, called *foliões*, imitate the three Magi (reis). The head of the group (o alferes) receives the alms. The householders who greet the *foliões* often offer them food or drink, the tradition being that those they visit are blessed (Cascudo 242-3). The line between *folias* and *congados*, similar rites celebrated by all-black Catholic brotherhoods to commemorate the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, is not easily drawn, as exemplified by the line spoken by King Belchior in the *folia de reis* segment of *A rua da amargura*: "... Lord, (here is) a casket of gold from my treasury that the King of Congo has come to bring you."

¹¹ *Mineiridade* is a noun with positive connotations that convey the good qualities of *Mineiro* culture.

¹² Plínio Marcos, born in Santos, São Paulo, in 1935, has been a leading

dramatist, journalist, and actor for the past four decades in Brazil. He is known for the gritty realism and sensationalist subject matter of his plays. Two of his best-known works are *Dois perdidos numa noite suja* (1966) and *Quando as máquinas param* (1959).

¹³ African Brazilian religious traditions are easily confused and frequently subjects of debate. Joseph Page provides a helpful guide in chapter fourteen of *The Brazilians*, identifying *candomblé* as the African Brazilian religion that has stayed closest to its African roots. Although some believe *candomblé* a genuinely syncretic blend of Catholicism and African spirit worship, others believe the syncretism to be derived from a strategy employed by slaves for practicing their native religion without arousing the ire of their Catholic masters. Xangô is Recife's version of *candomblé*, and macumba is a syncretic version of *candomblé*, popular in Rio de Janeiro, which combines folk Catholicism, black magic, Indian animism, and spiritism. *Umbanda* is an even more pluralistic religion. It is much like *macumba* but is considered more rational; practitioners do not sacrifice animals or go into wildly ecstatic trances. Many observers consider *umbanda* to be a national rather than an African Brazilian religion.

¹⁴ Macunaíma, the eponymous protagonist of Mario de Andrade's 1928 modernist novel, *Macunaíma, o herói sem nenhum caráter*, was named for the god who created the earth and the plants in Karib legend. He is a trickster figure who transcends several temporalities and cultures, making the novel one of the defining texts of Brazilian Modernism.

¹⁵ Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) was born in the city of São Paulo and was one of the leaders of the modernist movement in Brazil. Novelist, poet, playwright and journalist, he played a major role in the São Paulo Modern Art Week in 1922.

¹⁶ Playwright Eduardo Garrido (1842-1912) was born in Lisbon and emigrated to Rio de Janeiro. He became well known for his popular works, two of which he wrote with Brazilian dramatist Arthur Azevedo. He wrote *O Mártir do Calvário* when he was sixty years old.

¹⁷ *Frango ao molho pardo* translates as "chicken cooked in its own blood". This typical *Mineiro* dish, according to legend, was invented by the *Paulista bandeirantes* who traveled to Minas Gerais in search of gold and precious stones. While on the trail, they would take a chicken from a local farmer and, lacking elaborate culinary supplies, cook it in its own blood. This dish is still a favorite in Minas Gerais today and is part of the cuisine known as *comida mineira*, which is an important element in *Mineira* culture.

¹⁸ The Tupi, an indigenous people, inhabited the seacoast and central west of Brazil at the time of its colonization. In his "*Manifesto antropófago*" Oswald de Andrade suggests that they were the tribe that devoured Bishop Pedro Fernandes Sardinha, perhaps so he could create the pun, "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question". However, other sources credit the Caiová tribe for this deed.

¹⁹ Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) was a French surrealist playwright whose hu-

morously scatological play, *Ubu Roi* (1896), created for him a reputation as a forerunner of modernist art and inspired a number of adaptations.

²⁰ Over 100 years old, the Presépio do Pipiripau is a miniature replica of the Nativity scene that places it within a Mineira village and surrounding countryside. It is mechanized, with many moving parts and there are also sound and light components. This electrical marvel is owned by the Raimundo Machado de Azeredo family and can be seen in Belo Horizonte.

²¹ Congonhas do Campo, one of the colonial cities of Minas Gerais, is home to the Igreja do Bom Jesus de Matozinhos, which features many works by Aleijadinho, among them the twelve soapstone prophets surrounding the church. A separate *sala das devoções* on the premises houses a large collection of *ex-votos*. These objects are usually replicas of body parts, often hands, feet, arms, and legs, made of plaster or wax that are sent to a church by grateful petitioners who believe they have been cured by their prayers of whatever disease was afflicting a particular body part. However, a number of other objects, such as locks of hair, candles, crosses, saint's images, pieces of clothing, etc. can also be *ex-votos*. Grupo Galpão used almost all of these objects in the stage design of *A rua da amargura*.

²² The word *mambembe*, when applied to theatre, refers to a moving company, usually unsophisticated.

²³ Aleijadinho (1730-1814), the son of a Portuguese architect and a mother who was an African slave, was born Antônio Francisco Lisboa in Ouro Preto. He is the best-known *Mineiro* sculptor and architect of the eighteenth century. His nickname means "little cripple".

²⁴ Regina Horta Duarte writes that this tradition started around 1910, when circuses began to present live comedies and melodramas at the end of their shows to replace the more expensive animal acts and to provide an inducement for audiences that were being increasingly lured away from the circus by the competing phonograph and cinema (Duarte 203-05). The African Brazilian clown, Benjamin de Oliveira, was the father of theatre-circus. An actor, composer, singer, and playwright as well as a clown, he performed in a production of *O guarani* and in his own play *Os pescadores* (Torres 180-83). This tradition continued through most of the twentieth century; as late as 1976 O Circo Carlito was staging Garrido's passion play under the title *Paixão e morte* (Levi 253).

²⁵ When Villela was a boy, he used to jump the fence and sneak into the circus that occupied the grounds of his grandfather's country house to experience the magic of the Big Top. He knew then that he wanted to be a part of it all, but that he would have to wait until he grew up ("A magia do picadeiro").

²⁶ Edson appeared later in the show as Pontius Pilate.

²⁷ Ouro Preto, the first capital of Minas Gerais, was founded in 1711 as Vila Rica de Nossa Senhora do Pilar e Albuquerque. A major site of goldmining in the eighteenth century, the city boasts eleven colonial churches, and eight chapels, some filled with gold and silver, as well as works of sculp-

ture in soapstone and wood by Aleijadinho and paintings by Manuel da Costa Ataíde. Arguably the most frequently visited of the Minas Gerais colonial cities, it functions in the public consciousness as a synecdoche for *barroco mineiro*. We thank Maria José Ferreira for her help with our research on this subject.

²⁸ A *carioca* is a native or inhabitant of the city of Rio de Janeiro. *Cariocas* speak with an accent reminiscent of that of the Portuguese; one strong mark of the *carioca* accent is the pronunciation of "s" as "sh".

²⁹ Built in 1770 by João de Sousa Lisboa, o Teatro Municipal, formerly known as a Casa da Ópera de Vila Rica, is one of the oldest theaters in Latin America and is still in use today.

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