
Making it Relevant: Reflections on the Teaching of Brazilian Theatre in the United States

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In the “Up Front” section of a recent issue of *Theater* dedicated to the Brazilian stage, editor Tom Sellar expresses his surprise at “how little of Brazil’s contemporary theater is seen in North America. [...] Few of its writers, directors, and companies work or even tour here, despite the abundance of exciting voices and a new generation of artists. Perhaps language is the problem: the United States has many Spanish speakers and corresponding theaters, but Brazilian Portuguese remains an obstacle” (1). In her article in the same issue of the prestigious journal, theater director and scholar Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento references “a dynamic that has long configured Brazil as the other Latin America,” for, despite the country’s rich cultural production, “the study of Brazilian literature and visual and performing arts at English-speaking institutions appears as secondary.” Tatinge Nascimento comments further that Brazil

is frequently (and inexcusably) missing from Latin American programs, and syllabi for courses on Latin American theater seldom include Brazilian performance—at best they do so peripherally. [...] [P]ublications on theater in Latin America may include a single article on Brazilian modernism or playwrights active during the [military] dictatorship, but with the exception of a few reviews of performances featured at international festivals, these volumes insist on turning a blind eye on the country’s contemporary theater production. Exceptions are few and far between. (5)

An even more pessimistic view is presented by Margo Milleret in an article included in an issue the *Luso-Brazilian Review* dedicated to Brazilian theatre at two key moments in its history, the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Writing about Portuguese-language theatre in general and focusing her

analysis on the situation in language and literature departments in the 1990s, Milleret states bluntly that “even while I despair at the tenuous existence of Portuguese language and culture programs. [...] I am particularly concerned about the survival of my specialty—theater. [...] Portuguese language theater is the silenced voice within the minority discourse of Portuguese programs” (107).

That the teaching of the arts in an international context can pose diverse challenges does not come as much of a surprise to most instructors or students familiar with the originating culture or the language in which it is expressed. Nor is it a shock to learn that additional demands may await researchers and teachers of artistic manifestations conveyed in a language that is less commonly spoken or taught in the host society, as is the case of Portuguese in the United States. The teaching of the performing arts in particular is fraught with obstacles, both minor and major, especially when occurring outside the generating culture. No matter where they are performed, theatre and the other *artes cênicas* (including not only opera and dance but also stand-up comedy, improv art and other forms) are distinguished—as several critics and theorists (Carlson 2004, Phelan 1993, among others) have remarked—by their unrepeatable, irreproducible nature. Central to them is “the undocumented event of performance,” something whose “only life is in the present” (Phelan 146, 148).

A higher level of hardship presents itself when the research and the teaching do not take place in the same country and when even annual research trips are not sufficient to keep us on top of recent developments in the field.¹ As a consequence, we are prevented from experiencing in full not only different instantiations of a show, a play, a street intervention, etc., but also the diverse contexts out of which a particular performance evolved, be they cultural, artistic, linguistic, or political. And so, even with the invaluable research tools and the vastly improved access to our sources that have been afforded us by the ever-new advances in technology, we remain hampered in the activities—research and teaching—we conduct in tandem.

The title I have chosen for my contribution to this volume echoes the above-mentioned article by Milleret.² By titling her article “Making the Invisible Visible,” Milleret stresses the challenges facing those who teach and research Portuguese-language theatre in the United States and makes recommendations for remedying the near invisibility of Brazilian theatre in North American classrooms and scholarly journals. Writing almost twenty years after the publication of Milleret’s “commentary” (as she prefers to call her essay), I favor approaching the issue from a related but somewhat different

angle, that of relevance. Accepting the social and historical givens of working with a less commonly taught language attracting small numbers of heritage speakers in a nation that has received relatively limited immigration from Brazil, I am interested in exploring ways to make its theatre more meaningful to US audiences and students so as to have a more significant bearing on and connection with the North American and global scenes.

This search for ways to make Brazilian theatre more relevant to students and theatergoers alike has been the guiding principle for those of us who teach and write about it in the United States.³ Of this group, most are in traditional language and literature programs, but some are in theatre and drama departments.⁴ Unlike the former set, whose graduate degrees are mostly in literature and cultural studies, the latter did their doctorates in theatre and are actively involved with directing and staging plays. However, it is telling that even a theatre director and scholar with a distinguished publication record such as David George never had the opportunity to direct a Brazilian play in any language. George, who has vast stage experience as an actor and stage director, has produced numerous plays as a faculty member at Middlebury College and Lake Forest College, but those works have been mostly Spanish, French, and Spanish American classics. In an email communication, George comments that “the opportunity to direct a Brazilian play never presented itself. Teaching in small colleges, there was never a critical mass of students studying Portuguese to allow the production of a Brazilian play [...] [As a consequence] my work in that realm has been carried out in the wider world, in the publication of books, essays, and translations, as well as conference addresses, in the US, Latin America, and Europe” (Nov. 29, 2015).

Still, to return to the majority of those who teach Brazilian theatre in the US, namely, faculty and academic staff in more established language and literature programs, because of the nature and expectations of their appointments, they (I should say, we) tend to offer survey classes and the occasional seminar to graduate and undergraduate students, often in mixed groups, and with the expected challenges posed by our students’ different academic backgrounds and their limited familiarity with theatre and performance. Only in a few cases are these courses taught entirely in Portuguese, e.g. those offered by Libby Ginway at Georgia and later, Florida, Margo Milleret at New Mexico, and myself at Wisconsin. Most colleagues include some theatre in their literature surveys or use a combination of languages, often with the play script in the original language and accompanying translation, if available, and lecture and discussion, as well as criticism, in Portuguese and/or English

and Spanish. Even in courses offered entirely in English, teaching theatre in translation is no different from courses taught in other areas—literature, culture, music, film, introduction to Brazil—in that it often raises student interest in the language. Some of those students then go on to take other courses in Portuguese and some even declare a major or double major in the field.

Ginway and Milleret have offered Brazilian theatre courses taught entirely in Portuguese on numerous occasions, with healthy enrollments and almost always with a mixture of graduate and undergraduate students. While they did not have performances of entire plays, both mention including performance in their classrooms in some rather innovative ways. Ginway reports offering her students the chance to perform instead of writing a final paper and also allowing them to create a set or design costumes and write about their choices and how they would do the lighting; students have also had the option to film their performances to share with their classmates. Milleret reports including a strong use of performance in her teaching. In her response to the questionnaire attached in Appendix I, she reports that “[a]ll of the theater classes I taught included theater warm-ups, theater games, and improvisations. I had to find classrooms where the chairs could be moved in order to make room for more activity.” (For her more extended thoughts on these innovations, see below.) These were undergraduate classes; her graduate seminars were fewer (only two) and did not include these types of activities. In my own experience, I have only taught theatre to undergraduates as part of survey classes. Most of my theatre classes have been graduate seminars taught entirely in Portuguese. Whenever possible I have invited a well-known name to be in residence for at least one week; these memorable occasions have included visits by Professor João Roberto Faria (University of São Paulo) and Rio de Janeiro-based director and scholar Luiz Arthur Nunes. Over the years the focus of the seminars I have taught at Wisconsin has switched from a historicist and literature-centered one to a study of groups, *coletivos*, and performers. I have found that this perspective change in the presentation of Brazilian material in a US classroom has added to its relevance for those students. Despite the pessimistic tone at the beginning of her 1998 essay, Milleret issues a vibrant “call to action” (107) that offers a method to legitimize the teaching and study of Portuguese language theatre in the US. Of the six ways she proposes for remedying the current impasse and breaking the cycle that prevents an expansion in our field is an understanding that

“[t]heater and language learning are performative and make excellent mutual contexts in which to build skills levels” (110).

In recent years new and exciting trends have experienced a growing popularity in the classroom. One is the adoption of performativity as an approach to the teaching of fiction in literature courses; colleagues reporting successful use of this angle have focused on Clarice Lispector (Maria José Barbosa at Iowa)⁵ and Guimarães Rosa (Tatinge Nascimento at Wesleyan), among others. Another growing tendency involves broadly adopting the notion of performance⁶ to erase generic distinctions and so combine music, film, literature, and theatre in a course as reported, for example, by Rebecca Atencio at Tulane and Leila Lehnen at New Mexico. In the same line, adaptation theory can be applied creatively in new courses where texts from one genre receive new “readings” in another medium or art form. The erasure of old border lines can be nicely explored in adaptations from one medium to another, as, for example, film, television, and stage productions of such Brazilian classics as Machado de Assis’s *Dom Casmurro* and João Cabral de Melo Neto’s *Morte e vida severina*. With Tatinge Nascimento’s performance piece *Pornographic Angel* (examined in more detail below), based on her translation of short texts by Nelson Rodrigues, adaptation has proved again to be a key tool in increasing Brazilian theatre visibility in the United States.

For some time now, the Portuguese-language classroom, too, has seen the use of sketches, skits, short scenes, and even short plays in the language classroom and beyond. Exemplary of this approach is the course proposal put forth by Milleret in her 1998 article. The class is described at some length (110-12), with an outline of its structure and goals and a list of the resources used and the materials that were developed. Cultural context, language practice, and literary analysis receive considerable attention, but the focus is on performance, not only because it develops acting, but also because it “involves learning to work productively and cooperatively in order to complete the steps of putting on a play as a member of the cast and as a member of a technical or artistic production committee” (110). The course appears to have multiple benefits, including

giv[ing] language use a purpose as it engages students in negotiating the meaning of the play, the reasons for characters’ actions, the movements of characters and their props, etc.... The process of researching, rehearsing, and performing offers an insight into both the culture of the play and the culture of the theater.... Unlike the traditional study of prose or poetry, this approach to theater encourages student growth in the performance skills of public speaking and stage presence and in the social skills of community building and cooperation. Even if

performing Portuguese language theater did nothing for building an awareness of theater, it would be invaluable for its pedagogical content alone. (111)

For courses taught in Portuguese, play scripts are for the most part available either as books or an easy download from a specialized site, but for those where instruction is in English, translations are not always available or acceptable, nor are there any collections of one-act plays in English translation. As Tatinge Nascimento points out in her above-mentioned *Theater* essay, “[t]he stark absence of English translations of Brazil’s contemporary dramatic literature” is part of the image of Brazil as “the other Latin America” (5). As a partial consequence, while English translations of Spanish-American plays—in anthologies, multi-volume series, or stand-alone books—are widely available, the same is not true for Brazilian works. Some of the classics have appeared in translation as isolated publications⁷ but are mostly out of print, as are the anthologies that are key for the teaching and staging of Brazilian plays. The first, and to the best of my knowledge only, Portuguese-language anthology of Brazilian theatre published in the United States was the ground-breaking *Teatro brasileiro contemporâneo*, edited by Wilson Martins and Seymour Menton.⁸ Two other anthologies of Brazilian theatre in English translation include works by playwrights from the 1960s and 1970s (*3 [Three] Contemporary Brazilian Plays*)⁹; and from the 1990s and 2000s (*Theater* 45.2 [2015]). A fourth work is a critical anthology of Latin American theater edited by Diana Taylor and Sarah Townsend that includes key plays in English translation, among them three texts from Brazil.¹⁰ Of note as well is the two-volume compilation, published in Brazil, of plays of a sole author, Nelson Rodrigues.¹¹

Translations are obviously a key concern for scholars, directors, and the reading public as well. Having in mind mostly the works of a new generation of playwrights, Tatinge Nascimento believes that “[c]ommissioning English translations of Brazil’s dramatic literature could help introduce that country’s recent theatrical trajectory to a North American readership—and, by extension, the translations could reach those who use English as a lingua franca” (5).¹²

Among the consequences of the present shortage of these translations, the author mentions that

the grooming of future scholars able to translate and/or write about Brazil’s theatrical contributions to the international contemporary stage is now in jeopardy [...] [and] English readers’ access to informa-

tion about the country's vibrant contemporary theater is hindered by a lack of translations not only of dramatic literature but also of seminal writings by its actors, designers, directors, scholars, and critics. (6) Previously scarce, these translations are now experiencing a small but exciting revival, as witnessed in the above-mentioned issue of *Theater* (2015) featuring four recent Brazilian plays in English translation by Elizabeth Jackson.¹³ One of this country's foremost translators of Brazilian literature, Jackson proves here to be an equally gifted theatrical translator. In this body of work, Jackson eludes the pitfalls of approaching drama translation as simply a more complex dimension of literary translation. Rather, she shows a keen understanding of the text as "just one of the elements of theatre discourse that one has to render in a different language" (Peghinelli 21). For, as a mirror of and to the world, theatre "not only reflects the verbal utterances but also actions, gestures, silences and the whole apparatus that goes together with them. That is why in translating for theatre the intrinsic impossibility of translation becomes an even more complicated process" (21).¹⁴

Of the recent stagings of plays presented entirely in Portuguese on US campuses,¹⁵ I use as an example the one I am most familiar with, *As relações naturais* (*Natural Relations*; written in 1866; not staged for the first time until 100 years later, in 1966) by José Joaquim de Campos Leão, or Qorpo-Santo (1829-1883). It was performed entirely in Portuguese by graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under the direction of then-doctoral candidates in Portuguese, Ronaldo F. Ribeiro and Steven K. Smith (PhD 2008) (Image 1). The well-rehearsed cast put on uniform performances before a full house on two consecutive evenings at the end of the spring 2008 semester. The group adopted the name Troupe Usantus, a phonetic rendition of the Portuguese phrase *os santos*, or "the saints," an allusion to the play's concern with what constitutes purity or modesty in conjugal relations. The program handed to spectators (Image 2) as they entered the university's Play Circle included this summary of Qorpo Santo's best-known dramatic text:

A writer going through difficult times in his creative process struggles to unite and to give voice to his different facets. His comic and frustrated attempts to interact with women lead to a series of bizarre encounters, always under the watchful eye of his conscience and also observed by two choruses of women embodying the tension the author feels between family and responsibility on one hand and pleasure and lust on the other.

In an account included in Appendix II, the co-directors reflect on their experience rehearsing and producing the play, with particular attention to some of the more challenging staging decisions.

Of the Brazilian theatre scholars now active in the US, Tatinge Nascimento—a University of Wisconsin PhD in theatre and drama and current

TROUPE USANTUS
presents:

NATURAL RELATIONS

AS
RELAÇÕES
NATURAIS

by Qorpo Santo

8pm, May 4th & 5th

UW Madison
Play Circle Theater

For **free** tickets write:
troupeusantus@gmail.com

As Relações Naturais / Natural Relations

by Qorpo Santo

Staged by

TROUPE USANTUS

Directors: Ronald'UsantUs and Istivi Uzina Uzona

Stage Manager: Talía Guzmán-González

House Manager: Rebecca Laird

Music Composed by Juarez Maciel

Lighting: Amanda Cleary

Graphic Design: Elizabeth Barth

Sound Engineer: Abel Arango

The members of Troupe Usantus are deeply grateful to too many people to be mentioned here. We thank all our friends and colleagues who helped out in myriad little ways over the last months. We would especially like to acknowledge the support of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the extraordinary efforts of Professors Paola Hernández, Severino Albuquerque, and Ivy Corfis. Thanks are also due to Global Studies for printing support and to Professor Michael Peterson (Theatre and Drama) for his guidance.

*Merda!*Cast (in order of spoken lines)

Bem Mal Raznick, a Consciência

Pêro de Enxertia Maduro, Impertinente

Nikki W. d'UsantUs, a Consoladora

Zaza Santostein, a Intérpreta

Istivi Uzina Uzona, Truquetruque

Phifie Gíagía, la Vedette

Pacífica N. Guerrero

Xica B. d'Holanda

Marilyn Monroezinha

Ronald'UsantUs, o Inesperto

Blanche Ocolchão Humano

Patrícia A. Delícia

Cody Belafonte

Qorpo Santo (born José Joaquim Campos de Leão, 1829-1883) suffered some form of mental illness in the 1860s. He wrote comedies as a form of self-therapy and vengeance against society. Qorpo-Santo's art was outside the literary limits of his time.

Thematically, his plays dwell on sexual or psychological themes. His language and orthography are uniquely his own; action is stressed over the concept of literary creation.

(From Dictionary of Brazilian Literature)



chair of the Theatre Department at Wesleyan—comes closest to the teacher-critic-director ideal.¹⁶ She is the author of *Crossing Cultural Borders Through the Actor's Work: Foreign Bodies of Knowledge* (2009) and *The Contemporary Performances of Brazil's Post-Dictatorship Generation* (forthcoming). In addition to the numerous theatre courses she has taught at Wesleyan and other universities, Tatinge Nascimento has directed several Brazilian plays in the United States, with a particular interest in the theatre of Nelson Rodrigues. The intercultural approach she favors when directing Rodrigues's works abroad is best seen in her adoption of religious syncretism in a tragedy like *Senhora dos afogados* (*Lady of the Drowned*) or of elements of the carnivalesque in a comedy such as *A falecida* (*The Deceased Woman*).¹⁷

In her 2008 article, Tatinge Nascimento reflects on how the strong student interest in a course on Rodrigues that she taught at Wesleyan led to her directing the two plays mentioned in the previous paragraph. Soon, however, she realized that much of the student interest originated in the way they imagined Brazil. She knew that she had to destroy her students' "pretty picture of Brazil as a land of samba, beaches, carnival, and sexual freedom" while she was introducing them to the playwright's "stories of betrayal, child abuse, internalized racism, sexism, murder, suicide, sexual obsession, rape, and homophobia." In the paragraphs that follow, she reflects on the experience of teaching that course in 2002 at Wesleyan; they are rich in suggestions for those planning to teach Brazilian theatre in U.S. universities:

The course greatly emphasized group work [...] Each class meeting was treated as a laboratory in which we would analyze a play, read and view related materials, [...] create scenes, discuss them, throw them out and start all over again. Students functioned as actors, directors, dramaturges, and designers; maybe most importantly to me, they also acted as my first American spectators. As I saw how they responded to each one of the plays, I began developing a sense of how American audiences would receive Rodrigues's bizarre and yet poetic work. (34)

Eventually, as Tatinge Nascimento explains, their classes turned into "cross-cultural meetings":

if students were foreign to Rodrigues' world, my history growing up reading this author's plays had "normalized" them to me [...] [T]he students' discomfort and their very pertinent questions [...] came to deeply inform my work as a director of Rodrigues' plays in the American context. Their reaction forced me to engage in a posi-

tion of “productive engagement,” one that allowed me to reshape the inherent theatricality of Rodrigues’ narratives to audiences from a foreign land. (34-35)

By accomplishing this reworking of Nelson Rodrigues’ theatre for the context of different host societies, the director succeeds in making his plays more relevant to non-Brazilian spectators.

The confluence of Tatinge Nascimento’s diverse professional facets is best illustrated in *Pornographic Angel*, a performance script that she wrote based on a selection of Rodrigues’ short stories.¹⁸ As she explains in her 2008 article,

[t]he performance used choreographed movement, Brazilian ballroom dance, puppetry, sparse set pieces, period music, children’s songs, live soundscape, and video to contrast elements from Brazilian tradition with New York audiences’ contemporary and urban reality. The result was a very unique and unexpected interpretation of Rodrigues, a performance that simultaneously rang as foreign and familiar to Brazilian and American audiences alike. (41)

In an article published in 2010, Fernando de Sousa Rocha, a professor of Portuguese at Middlebury College and a core member of the *Pornographic Angel* production team, examines in detail the group’s dramatic strategy. In order to make the performance’s atmosphere more relevant to US audiences, Tantrum Theater used three “essential scenic modalities,” namely, the creation of intertextual relationships that prevented a sole tone (tragedy, comedy, melodrama, etc.) to prevail; the staging of a kind of dramatic prologue where the audience had a prior summary of the Rodriguean pornographic scene, akin to the Freudian notion of “posteriority,” or *Nachtraeglichkeit*; and the frequent use of repetitions, which, by “denaturalizing” the characters, allowed difference to emerge. As a result of the shifting interplay of the three strategies, the spectator was positioned where the perspective of a “pornographic angel” would be (71). In a sense, Rocha concludes,

that [...] is what *Pornographic Angel* proposes by unfolding a narrative that enacts Rodrigues’ pornographic scene, but in such a manner that it belongs to no one in particular and maintains no individual perspective. With eyes that can no longer rest solely on our own personal experiences, we as spectators finally witness the unearthing of naked, blue Little Angels who are also a response to death, a living one. (85)

To conclude, it seems to me that the way out of the impasse detected by Margo Milleret almost twenty years ago, which is still largely ongoing today, is twofold. At the undergraduate level, we need to consider teaching theater along with film and music in surveys of performing arts offered in English or Portuguese; this could be bolstered in language classes by the use of scenes from Lusophone plays or student-written sketches based on works of their choice. At the graduate level, an increased collaboration is needed between the departments of theatre, performing arts, and languages and literatures, leading to the creation of joint degrees in two or three fields.

My goal here has been to have a clearer picture of Brazilian theater in this country and thereby begin to understand the complexities inherent in teaching this field. While examining the information I was able to gather, I noticed that I was also compiling—without setting out to do so—a historical sketch of our collective endeavor. The result is, of course, not thorough and is presented here as a preliminary contribution to be built upon by others who are also invested in improving and expanding the visibility and the teaching of Brazilian theatre so as to make it more relevant in the United States.

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Notes

¹ An obvious contrast are the ample resources available to those teaching theatre in Brazil, including the annual *Semanas do Ensino do Teatro* held every October at UNIRIO's *Escola de Teatro* in Rio de Janeiro.

² In doing so, I am recognizing Professor Milleret for her dedication to the teaching of, and scholarship on Brazilian theatre in the United States. In the last decades of the 20th century and first years of this one, Milleret, who has taught at Tennessee and New Mexico—along with David George at Lake Forest College, Libby Ginway at Florida, Leslie Damasceno at Princeton and Duke, and myself, and following the pioneering efforts of Óscar Fernández at Iowa, Alfred Hower at Florida, and Fred Clark at North Carolina—has been a leading voice in the dissemination of Brazilian theatre in US academia, part of a small but dedicated group that has consistently included such courses in our teaching assignments. We have been joined in recent years by a younger generation that includes Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento at Wesleyan, Robert Moser at Georgia, and Cláudio Medeiros and Fernando Rocha at Middlebury, among others.

³ I would like to express here my gratitude to everyone who responded to my messages and also to the brief questionnaire I sent to several colleagues in preparation for the writing of this essay. In designing the questionnaire, I wanted to gauge the diversity of experiences related to the teaching of Brazilian theatre in US colleges and universities and the performance of scenes or entire plays on US campuses or other venues. The text of the questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix I.

⁴ A further distinction needs to be made between those teaching in large, often Research I state universities and those teaching in small colleges. The latter have fewer, if any, chances to teach Brazilian theatre or direct a Brazilian play.

⁵ See Barbosa's chapter in Albuquerque and Bishop-Sanchez, eds., *Performing Brazil*, 269-84, and André Luís Gomes's book on Clarice Lispector.

⁶ For an array of recent studies and examples of performance in Brazilian art, identity, and culture, see Albuquerque and Bishop-Sanchez, eds., *Performing Brazil*.

⁷ Martins Pena, "A Country Justice of the Peace" [*O juiz de paz da roça* (1838)], trans. Willis Knapp Jones, *Poet Lore: A Quarterly of World Literature* 54.2 (1948) 99-119; Alfredo Dias Gomes, "Payment as Pledged" [*O pagador de promessas* (1960)], trans. Óscar Fernández, in *The Modern Stage of Latin America: Six Plays*, ed. George Woodyard. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971. 43-117; and Roberto Athayde, *Miss Margarida's Way* [*Apareceu a Margarida* (1973)], trans. R. Athayde. New York: Avon Books, 1977, to quote only three examples of smash hits from different periods.

⁸ Used by two generations of US university students in the United States, the anthology included a helpful, twelve-page history of theatre in Brazil, as well as short introductions and a set of exercises related to each of the plays, and a sizable (54 pages) Portuguese-English glossary written and compiled by the two editors, distinguished professors at Wisconsin and New York University (Martins) and Kansas and the University of California-Irvine (Menton). The five plays and authors were: *O homem que fica*, Raymundo Magalhães Júnior; *As mãos de Eurídice*, Pedro Bloch; *A moratoria*, Jorge Andrade; *A raposa e as uvas*, Guilherme Figueiredo; and the acclaimed *Auto da Compadecida*, Ariano Suassuna.

⁹ The volume was edited by Elzbieta Szoka and Joe W. Bratcher III (Austin: Host Publications, 1988; rev. ed. 2006). The three plays are *Two Lost in a Filthy Night* (*Dois perdidos numa noite suja*) by Plínio Marcos; *Moist Lips, Quiet Passion* (*Boca molhada de paixão calada*) by Leilah Assumpção; and *Walking Papers* (*Aviso prévio*) by Consuelo de Castro. The plays were translated by Elzbieta Szoka, Lydia Gouveia Marques, and Celina Pinto

¹⁰ The three Brazilian plays illustrate important periods: Martins Pena's *Os ciúmes de um pedestre, ou O terrível capitão do mato* (1845) ("The Jealous Officer, or The Fearsome Slave Catcher," trans. Sarah J. Townsend), Oswald de Andrade's *O rei da vela* (1933) ("The Candle King", trans. Townsend and Ana Bernstein), and Denise Stoklos' *Mary Stuart* (1987) (trans. Stoklos and Marlène Ramírez-Cancio).

¹¹ Published by Brazil's Fundação Nacional de Arte or FUNARTE. A projected third volume has not materialized; the two extant volumes are marred by unfortunate translation and printing issues. Because of these and other problems, including the always-difficult challenge of obtaining rights for international productions, the publication of these volumes has done little to promote Rodrigues's work to US audiences.

¹² The author acknowledges that "language is not the only barrier to Brazil's recognition in Latin American studies" and refers to corruption, violence, and other problems as impediments to a more widespread interest in the nation's arts and culture (6).

¹³ The four plays are *Symphony Dream* (*Sinfonia sonho*) by Diogo Liberano; *The Meal* (*A refeição*) by Newton Moreno; *Psalm 91* (*Salmo 91*) by Dib Carneiro Netto; and *Fluxorama* by Jô Bilac.

¹⁴ Peghinelli is drawing from Anne Ubersfeld's dictum that "[i]n theatre the impossible reigns, theatre works with the impossible, and is made to express the impossible" (qtd in Peghinelli 21).

¹⁵ Responses to the questionnaire do not mention any other staging, recent or otherwise, in Portuguese of an unabridged or somewhat abridged Brazilian play on a US campus. Of the productions of a complete play in English translation, of note was the staging of Dias Gomes's *O pagador de promessas*—translated by Óscar Fernández as *Payment as Pledged* (see Note 6 above)—at the Experimental Theater of the University of Kansas in the spring of 1967.

¹⁶ Cláudio Medeiros of Middlebury College is another excellent example of a theatre scholar who also teaches and directs. Among the plays he has directed for the Middlebury Theater Program are two works by Nelson Rodrigues, both in English translation: *Waltz Number 6* (presented in tandem with *Never Swim Alone* by Canadian playwright Daniel MacIvor) in the spring of 2004 and *The Wedding Dress* in the spring of 2006. Reflecting on the two productions, Medeiros writes that the former was "more successful in part because of its abstracted nature" which may have made it more relevant to US audiences while

the latter “seemed, ultimately, much less universal” as there appears to be “something quintessentially Brazilian, or at least Latin American, in it” that may not have come across as readily to the Vermont spectators (email communication pp. 269-84).

¹⁷ In her 2008 article, Tatinge Nascimento provides a detailed description of her directing approach and announces her directorial vision for the staging of one of Rodrigues’ most poetic texts and also his only monologue, *Valsa número 6 (Waltz Number 6)* (44-45). Other Rodrigues plays staged in the United States include productions— all in New York City—of *Nelson2Rodrigues*, directed by Antunes Filho in 1989; *A mulher sem pecado (The Woman without Sin)*, directed by Luiz Arthur Nunes in 2000; and *Beijo no asfalto (The Asphalt Kiss)*, directed by Sarah Cameron Sunde in 2005. The flaws in the latter production have led Tatinge Nascimento to write that “at the same time that I recognize that the publication of plays in English represents significant progress for the discovery of Rodrigues in the U.S., I believe that creating productions that stimulate and speak directly to the American audience is a complex problem” (unpublished ms). Planned US productions of other Rodrigues plays, including those of *Dorotheia (Dorothea)* and *Toda nudez será castigada (All Nudity Shall Be Punished)*, have not materialized.

¹⁸ The script based on the eight Rodrigues stories is available in *The Dirty Goat 17* (2007): 90-119. The short stories and *crônicas* that inspired the play are available in English as Nelson Rodrigues, *Pornographic Angel*, trans. Alex Ladd (Austin, TX: Host Publications, 2007). A more generous collection of Rodrigues’ stories translated from his column in Rio de Janeiro newspapers, *A vida como ela é*, is found in *Life as it is: Selected Stories*, trans. Alex Ladd (Austin, TX: Host Publications, 2009). *Pornographic Angel* was performed by the Tantrum Theater Company first at the Yale 2007 Summer Cabaret in New Haven, CT, and subsequently at The Ohio Theatre in New York City, Sept. 7-30, 2007. “Unpleasant Theatre,” a translation (by Elizabeth Jackson) of Rodrigues’ seminal text, “Teatro desagradável,” was included in the performance program of *Pornographic Angel*.

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APPENDIX I

Questionnaire

I. Courses you have taught:

1. Please give course title, year, enrollments, if graduate or undergraduate, language of instruction, and frequency with which the course has been offered, name of college(s) or university(ies) where you have taught this course. If multiple courses, please include an entry per course.
2. Please indicate if this course or these courses has/have been:
 - a. entirely on Brazilian theater (if not entirely, give percent of instruction);
 - b. Brazilian literature survey (give percent of instruction);
 - c. Latin American theater survey (same);
 - d. Latin American literature survey (same);
 - e. Brazilian women writers (same);
 - f. Latin American women writers (same);
 - g. Brazilian women dramatists/playwrights;

- h. Latin American women dramatists/playwright (same);
- i. Introduction to Brazil (or Latin America) or to Brazilian Culture (or Latin American culture): (same);
- j. other courses (e.g. Modern Drama Survey; World Literature; Literature of Emerging Nations; etc).

II. Directing (or supervising student directing) of Brazilian plays, whether or not as part of a course you taught or co-taught:

1. Please include here any information about performances (such as classroom skits, street ‘events’, interventions, stand-up comedy, performance as a protest or pedagogical tool, etc, as well as play readings). Please give play or performance title, name of playwright or collective authorship (as in a group), location, language, frequency, name of college or university, or group from high school or local community.

APPENDIX II

The Staging of *As Relações Naturais*: An Account by the Co-Directors

Troupe Usantus

Text by Qorpo-Santo, adapted by Ronaldo Ribeiro and Steven K. Smith
May 4 and 5, 2008

Play Circle, Memorial Union, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Each year, the Spanish program at UW-Madison puts on a Spanish-language play for a general audience of students, faculty, staff, and community members. In late 2007, a group of Portuguese graduate students wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to add a Portuguese play to the event. Our two main goals were to have fun and to expose people to Brazilian theater. The group comprised undergrads, grad students, and faculty members, and was dubbed Troupe Usantus - a compound made-up word in Portuguese for “The saints.” The name was chosen to communicate ironically that irreverence and artistic license would be the norm in the troupe’s aesthetic processes. The synergy with the more-established Spanish play relieved us of some of the financial and logistical burden of staging a play as compared to going it alone.

It was apparent early on that we faced two main hurdles to be overcome. The first of these was that the production was going to be put together by a group of amateurs with varying levels of Portuguese fluency, experience with

live theater, and knowledge of Brazilian literature. The second challenge was that our audience was not going to be fluent in Portuguese. Although many in the audience would be able to understand given their fluency in Spanish, many would not understand the words of our production.

To address both obstacles, we decided to focus primarily on the performativity aspects of theater over the text itself. We (somewhat presumptuously?) edited the Qorpo-Santo text, taking out longer, more obscure passages, and emphasizing the broader and more dramatic aspects of the play. Our hope was to have the group work the text and use Boalian theater production concepts to expose the group to the idea of “teatro de grupo” whereby the end production would arise organically from collaborative exercises. At the same time, recognizing the time limitations we faced (especially time in the theater itself), we added explicit staging ideas to the production script. Recognizing that explicit stage directions were somewhat counter to our desire to make the production as collaborative as possible, we allowed for the staging to change, which in fact it did quite a bit as group members came up with ideas.

In order to bring out the collaborative aspect as much as possible, for our first several rehearsals the text was secondary and we did not assign roles right away. Each rehearsal started with Ribeiro leading the group in Boalian physical “games” to build group cohesion and disinhibit our actors. In the early rehearsals, Smith wrapped up with readings of the text, helping people to get a sense of the play and practicing pronunciation and (again somewhat presumptuously) adapting Qorpo-Santo’s text to our needs. As we got closer to the performance itself, we continued this directorial division, with Smith focusing on line memorization and the text itself and Ribeiro taking the lead on more physical aspects of gesture and physical staging. To emphasize antirealism and self-reflexivity, Grotowski’s notions of poor theater were incorporated in the process. Makeup was exaggerated and costuming was minimalist, created and designed by the troupe, consisting of ragged shirts adorned with spray paint. *Tableau vivants* were part of the actor’s training and widely used in the performance to aid the audience’s comprehension. Vivid red lightning, contrasting with darkness and sudden brightness, along with chamber music by the Brazilian composer Juarez Maciel, created a tense and somewhat surreal atmosphere in the opening act and in the following five major scenes.

Our guiding principle for the organization of the production was participation. Those who didn’t want large speaking roles were given other responsibilities (makeup, costuming, scenery, etc.) so that all members of Troupe Usantus were integrally involved in the production.