

Nelson 2 Rodrigues

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This article is the second in a two-part series on epochal stagings of works by playwright Nelson Rodrigues (1912-1980). In the first study I discuss the Brazilian stage's entrance into the modern era via Os Comediantes' 1943 production of *Vestido de Noiva* (*Bridal Gown*), directed by Zbigniew Ziembinski.¹ The most recent milestone, the subject of this article, is the 1984 staging of *Nelson 2 Rodrigues*, directed by Antunes Filho with his Grupo Macunaíma, which includes two of the playwright's works, *Album de Família* (*Family Album*) and *Toda Nudez Será Castigada* (*All Nakedness Will be Punished*). This article continues the examination of the playwright's controversial themes and introduction of new forms of theatrical language, scrutinizing the texts of *Album* and *Nakedness* and focusing on their transposition to the stage. My contention is that the mythical and archetypal dimensions embedded in the works provide the strongest link between playwright and director, playtext and staging.

Nelson Rodrigues and Ziembinski brought manifold changes to the national stage, and the playwright has influenced much of contemporary Brazilian dramaturgy. It is therefore ironic that his work was denigrated after the success of *Bridal Gown*. His 1945 *Family Album*, which marks the beginning of his mythic cycle, offended audiences and critics and was censored for decades. Most of his works, mainly for their frank depiction of sexual themes, as well as his political views, were controversial. Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia, the country's most significant company in 1950's, was too concerned with "good taste" to have staged his plays. In the 1960's Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina did not stage his works because he supported the military dictatorship.

Eventually the author's artistic reputation would be vindicated. His rehabilitation began in the 1970's, with innovative productions of his works by directors Antunes Filho and Osmar Rodrigues Cruz. The definitive staging, however, was Grupo Macunaíma's 1981 *Nelson*

Rodrigues: *O Eterno Retorno*, restaged and retitled in 1984 as *Nelson 2 Rodrigues*.² The latter production included the once detested *Family Album*, a terrifying journey through an incestuous and murderous web of family relationships.

FAMILY ALBUM: TEXT

Album deals with a large land-holding family in rural Brazil, 1924, that commits acts of incest, sexual abuse, murder, and suicide. Family members include Jonas, the father, his wife Senhorinha, and the children, Glória, Edmundo, Guilherme, and Nonô. Family album photographs serve as counterpoint to the tragedy. A social columnist, the Speaker, comments hypocritically upon the pictures. The photos deal mostly with past action while the main plot takes place in the present. The story seems on the surface melodramatic, improbable. There is no police investigation of the many deaths, coincidences abound, and the characters express grotesque extremes of emotion.

Family Album cannot be judged according to the realist canon. It does not attempt to reproduce on stage rational observations of social behavior. In spite of a specific time and place, the real action of the play conforms to the characters' inner lives. Outside reality is merely situational. Jonas and his family overturn social and moral codes by revealing their deepest yearnings and by speaking directly from the unconscious. Dialogue in *Family Album* and other mythic plays is filled with expressions of forbidden sex, fear, and murderous desire. What would normally be repressed is shouted on the stage. There is no sublimation, no subtlety, only the brutal explosion of feeling. A common procedure in presenting characters on stage is to reveal their inner selves through the play of masks and social exchange. The realist-naturalist theatrical tradition, in fact, mirrors a social norm that demands psychological self-censorship. Nelson Rodrigues' characters, however, are presented directly, from the inside out, piercing the shield of normative behavior and social convention. That is why their behavior at times strains credulity: there is no barrier between desire and act. They confess openly the most horrible crimes that leap from the secret passageways of unconscious urges. In some of their statements, the characters return to an infantile state of primordial desire, fear, and rage, as when one complains, "Mama(...)never liked me. It was all for you,you!(...)She used to watch you bathe. WHY DIDN'T SHE EVER REMEMBER TO WATCH ME BATHE?"³ And all the members of *Album's* family participate in a vortex of incestuous relationships. The principal reason for these actions and utterances is that the work suspends the realist-naturalist rules of cause and effect and carries the reader/spectator into a mythical and

archetypal universe.

In spite of a specified time and place--a São Paulo plantation, early 1900's--the characters live in an atemporal space, outside society, law, history. Jonas' clan symbolizes the mythical, primordial family, *ab origine*. The play begins with the album photo depicting Jonas and Senhorinha's wedding in 1900. Both the marriage ritual and the date represent notions of beginning (birth, century). Jonas and Senhorinha exist "before History and Civilization,"⁴ and thus become a kind of Adam and Eve whose behavior obeys the myths of humankind, which persist in the archetypal dimensions of the collective unconscious.

Antunes Filho has utilized Mircea Eliade's theories on the myth of the eternal return to inform his staging, hence the *eterno retorno* of the 1981 title. The director understands that *Album* in particular corresponds to Eliade's view of archaic societies, whose members perceive time in a cyclical manner. That is, time repeats an eternal cycle and returns always to the same point, to an original creation or event in the beginning. While nature moves in a cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth, archaic man views time as a mirror of nature's movement and attempts to regenerate the creation myths through ritual.

In *Family Album* Nelson Rodrigues has projected his characters back to the time before time of creation, and their behavior will fulfill the implacable destiny of the eternal cycle. Their tragic, accursed fate is bound up in the familial myths of Electra and Oedipus. At the same time, the characters use their mythical stature to justify their actions. Jonas believes that in his position as father, as a kind of biblical patriarch, he deserves the sacred respect of his family. He sees himself as god-like and his behavior--the seduction and murder of young girls--beyond censure. He surrounds sexual desire for his daughter with a religious aura. Glória is for him a "porcelain saint," an "angelic image," and he identifies all his victims with her.

While the wedding began the mythical world, it is Glória's return to the plantation that precipitates the main action of the play. The mere mention of her name brings a change over the other family members, for they imagine she represents what they are not: primordial innocence. But she also embodies the myth of Electra. Like the other characters, Glória insists on the purity of her feelings and imbues incest with religious meaning: she sees Jonas as a Christ-like figure.

Senhorinha burns with passion for her three sons, which she realized the moment each was born. That is, her incestuous feelings go back to a time of creation, symbolized by her sons' birth. Her

deepest love is for Nonô, and by seducing him she has triggered Jonas' own pattern of sexual abuse and the long series of terrible events culminating in the violent deaths of most of the family members. Senhorinha's seduction of Nonô is the family's original sin, and the cause of his madness. So that she can be free to love her son without restraint, Senhorinha kills her husband.

The sons in turn embody the Oedipus myth. Passionate desire for Senhorinha leads them to patricidal fantasies and deadly sibling rivalry. Edmundo describes to Senhorinha a mythic time of oedipal bliss, *ab origine*: "I believe that man should never leave his mother's womb Heaven, before birth, was your womb" (102). Incest, then, becomes a longing for paradise lost. Guilherme, on the other hand, castrates himself to purge his sexual desires. When he cannot overcome the family destiny he transfers the morbid obsession to his sister Glória, whom he imagines to be purity incarnate. In the end, he murders her upon discovering that she loves Jonas. All of the family's passions, whether lustful or murderous, are turned inward and fulfilled within its enclosed incestuous circle. Heloísa says of her husband, "I did not exist for him. Edmundo could only love or hate members of his own family. He was unable to love, or to hate, anyone else" (112). Edmundo's own words demonstrate the mythical nature of the family prison: "Mother, sometimes I feel as if the world were empty, and no one existed but us, meaning you, Papa, myself, my sister and brothers. As if our family were the first and only one. In that case, love and hate must have arisen among us" (102).

While Jonas and Senhorinha's family life represents a time of creation, the play's action paradoxically takes place at the end of the mythic cycle, in the phase of chaos and destruction, before the phase of regeneration, which Mircea Eliade describes in the context of primitive societies as a time of orgies and unrestraint, the unleashing of demons. *Album* deals with Jonas' libertinage and the unleashing of the family's sex and death demons. According to Amália Zeitel, death in the play does not constitute crime against human life; it signifies ritual passage, the process of liberation toward rebirth, sacrifice leading to liberation. Nelson Rodrigues "defends man's right to be as he is and to have full power over his own acts and being." But the "circumstances of man's life, when governed by himself, are disastrous." There is one alternative: "Only rebirth and resurrection remain as a means of redemption, [leading to] an age of love."⁵ Scrutiny of the playtext supports this view. At the end of the play, after the death of Jonas, the author writes, "Dona Senhorinha leaves to find Nonô and start a new life" (119). To reinforce the idea of death leading to rebirth, "a new life," the playwright closes *Family Album* with a funeral prayer in Latin, an ancient ritual that

perpetuates the eternal cycle of birth/death/rebirth.

"In Nelson Rodrigues the excavation takes us back to the archeological roots of the human being,"⁶ to the ancient myths, which persist in the instinctual repository that Jung calls the collective unconscious and which contains the archetypes. Not only do *Family Album's* characters project the "archeological roots" directly, they are themselves archetypal symbols of the collective unconscious.

Jonas and Senhorinha represent two archetypes upon which the entire Jungian system hinges: *animus*, the father symbol, the man within the woman, and *anima*, which corresponds to the mother, and provides "female" characteristics for the male personality. One's relationship to these archetypes is vital for development; they can either abet growth and maturity or hinder them. In their positive function, they become agents of love and spirituality. In their negative forms, they may become death demons, as Jonas and Senhorinha do when they devastate the lives of their children. Glória imagines her father a Christ-like figure. A superficial conclusion would be that she projects on Jonas the *animus'* highest level, its spiritual dimension. A closer examination of the father/daughter relationship, however, reveals that the Christ-like image is only a false conception perpetrated by Jonas and naively embraced by Glória. She is entrapped by the negative *animus* which keeps her pathologically tied to the father figure, unable to relate to the outside world, to people beyond the *huis clos* of the plantation. The negative *anima* crushes the young men's spirit. Edmundo attempts to break free of maternal bonds when he marries Heloísa, but he never makes love to her. His wife characterizes the negative *anima* as the "other woman," a haunting presence which prevents Edmundo from consummating the marriage. And so he returns home to annihilation in the *anima's* embrace. The internal mother, however, is not always identical to the external mother. When Jonas reveals Senhorinha's infidelity Edmundo turns against her. His "love" for his mother is really a projection of the negative *anima*, which ties him to an impossible dream of maternal purity, to his vision of paradise within the womb. Edmundo and his father are also possessed by the *anima*, locked into archetypal infancy. Accusing Senhorinha of both infidelity and frigidity, Jonas makes this startling statement: "Women are not even females!"(105) Jonas' oxymoron expresses an infantile *anima* manifestation in which the man views female sexuality as repugnant because he projects his illusion of maternal purity on all women.

In spite of its mythic structure, *Family Album* does touch upon certain points of social reality. For one thing, most of the tragedy in the play is the direct result of sexual obsession. And Nelson Rodrigues, in his real-life role as police reporter, associated sex with

uncontrolled urges on the part of the mighty: "Power stimulates the desire for material satisfaction, including sex."⁷ Jonas uses his high social station to abuse and even murder young girls with impunity, and the victims' families, from the lower classes, are degraded when they collaborate with him. His actions transform sex into a social metaphor, the rape of the poorer classes in Brazil. Extremes of human behavior do not exist only in some distant mythical universe. While the sexual exploitation of young girls by the lord of the manor characterizes the Brazilian patriarchal system, incest and sexual abuse of children are not exclusive to that nation; they are timely subjects in American society as well.

ALL NAKEDNESS WILL BE PUNISHED

Twenty years separated *Album* and *Nakedness* (1965). The latter play culminated his Carioca tragedy series,⁸ which suffered a kinder fate than did the mythic plays, because their grounding in a concrete reality made them more palatable to the aesthetic standards of audiences and critics, and the public had become more tolerant of previously taboo subjects. Before its success on the stage *Nakedness* was made into a 1973 movie that received wide acclaim. It was fixed definitively in the Brazilian dramatic firmament with Grupo Macunaíma's 1981 and 1984 productions.⁹

Randal Johnson has done a thorough study of *Nudez*,¹⁰ so I limit my comments to a few general observations. The work parallels *Family Album* in many ways. Both plays unleash the potentially deadly power of sexual obsession. Although *Nakedness* is less mythical and closer to social reality than *Album*, its characters are destroyed by their own primordial impulses: "playthings of the ancestral forces acting upon them, they speak with the voice of the most legitimate human nature, but they squander this heroic exuberance in their rash gestures."¹¹ That is, Nelson Rodrigues also presents in this play the central notion that there is a thin veil of rationality covering irrationality, madness, and archetypal levels.

NELSON 2 RODRIGUES ¹²

In the 1984 staging Antunes Filho has reduced the four works of the 1981 production to two and the three acts of *Album* and of *Nakedness* to one each. The director and his company have demonstrated clearly to audiences, critics, and other members of the theatre community in the 1980's that built into Nelson Rodrigues' texts is a unique and most contemporary vision of stagecraft. Following the example of Grupo Macunaíma, it is now possible for critics who

approach these texts to discover specific stage directions for attitude, gesture, movement, lighting, and sound, whose importance is equal to that of his bold vision of society. Moreover, Antunes Filho has brought to light the playscripts' profound archetypal and mythical levels to inform the staging. He has preceded the critics in finding new keys to interpreting the playwright: the concepts of Mircea Eliade and Carl Jung. A close reading of Nelson Rodrigues' plays, as the reader has seen, proves the validity of these discoveries, and to communicate them to audiences the director has created a total theatrical language comprised of cinematic visual imagery, a vast array of sound effects, a ritual-processional style of movement, and an acting method that aims to reproduce the language of the unconscious.

FAMILY ALBUM: STAGING

The stage directions in *Family Album* indicate an acting style reminiscent of Expressionism: exteriorization of inner states and grotesque extremes of emotion verging on the melodramatic. The actor is instructed to use a "cruel expression" or the "maximum hysteria possible", with wildly fluctuating and abrupt changes in emotion. For example, one 20-line stretch of *Album* (60) describes Jonas' states as taciturn, suffering, startled, profoundly interested, violent, controlled rage, somber. All of this could lead simply to the overblown and false acting of melodrama and soap opera, and indeed there is a correlation. It is also derived from the style of the Expressionist cinema (Antunes believes that Jonas was modeled after Nosferatu). Nelson Rodrigues' constant stream of directions regarding fluctuation in attitude and gesture also refers to a condition akin to the metamorphosis of dreams or schizophrenia in which there is direct access to the unconscious.

Antunes bases his acting method on a collective approach of multiple role playing,¹³ whose thrust is to allow the actor to manipulate unconscious forces on stage. To prepare for *O Eterno Retorno*, the company rehearsed for over a year, twelve hours a day, with subsequent lengthy rehearsals for the 1984 restaging. The actors were trained in a variety of performing arts--movement, breathing, diction, dance, music--and in oriental modes like Tai-Chi, Yoga, and Zen meditation. The system ideally enables the actors to function in a state of total awareness like that of meditation, with a flow of impulses from the unconscious to which the actor can respond instantaneously and therefore control. The director explains that, "in Brazilian theatre actors are intuitive and out of control. They scream and shout and run all over the stage and the result is chaos. I try to train my actors to make every movement and gesture count."¹⁴ The

result is that the actors in *Album* "play off" the melodrama to create a kind of Brechtian distance and successfully convey Antunes/Nelson Rodrigues' intentions, expressing an array and flux of emotions to create an oneiric climate.¹⁵ Actor Marcos Oliveira portrays Jonas as a Nosferatu-like figure, without accentuating the horror such a character evokes. Oliveira makes Jonas' monstrous behavior seem "natural," and in fact manages to bring out an absurd, grotesque humor in his actions and statements. The horror of the vampire myth is emphasized in other ways. Constant screams are heard from off-stage during the production, the terror taking place just outside the audience's field of vision. The stage directions indicate, "a frightening, inhuman, animal shriek, a thick, heavy voice, of someone who has screamed and suffered unbearably" (58-59). The cries suggest both the fear of Jonas' victims, the young girls in labor, perhaps dying, and the madness of his soon, Nonô. Spectators are also reminded of the victims' screams in Nosferatu's castle. On another level, the incessant expression of unseen horror represents the primal scream, immersion into the unconscious and into the world of primitive myth.

Antunes adds further elements to the auditory frame. *Family Album*, the first part of the program, begins with Nelson Rodrigues' voice, recorded shortly before his death (six months prior to the opening), telling the audience how he became a playwright.¹⁶ Another recorded voice heard throughout is that of the Speaker, who announces and comments upon the album photos. This unseen character is a Greek chorus gone awry, a kind of stupid social columnist, or "public opinion" as the playwright calls him, "incapable of being moved by genuine feeling." His comments, made in a commercial broadcasting voice and "in hideously bad taste,"¹⁷ transmit false information and gloss over the family's tragic circumstances. He speaks in a tone of hypocritical morality and when he gives scriptural advice--"grow and multiply"--to Jonas and Senhorinha on their wedding day, he sounds merely salacious. His frivolous advice about etiquette--whether or not young ladies should drink soda from the bottle--contrasts absurdly with the family horrors. Thus, the Speaker, along with the photos, serves as a fiercely ironic counterpoint to the main action of the play, the form for a totally opposite content. While this device is a means for the playwright to manipulate the language of social convention, subverting it and exposing what it attempts to hide, the Speaker also "relaxes the tragic tension of the events."¹⁸ Indeed, his comments unflinchingly provoke audience laughter during the production.

The Speaker's remarks accompany the album pictures. The playwright was the first in Brazil with a distinct visual style, which the photos exemplify vividly. In the play's opening scene a photographer sets the stage for the wedding photo. According to

playscript, "with this scene, completely silent, it is possible to create the small ballet of a family photograph" (55). The suggestions are enticing for the director: dance-like movement in silence to create an oneiric effect, and the director uses them to rich and varied plastic effect. According to the magazine *Isto É*, Antunes Filho is the only Brazilian stage director with a distinctive style, an *auteur* capable of "maximum visual perfection with minimum technical resources."¹⁹ While the staging of *Macunaíma* was informed by the visual leitmotif of *blocos* or Carnival street bands,²⁰ the director has found for *Family Album* an equally compelling visual solution, based on processions.

In Brazil the frequency and variety of processions characterizes the importance of ritual and myth in that society. Many processions belong to Catholic liturgy, some are folkloric, and others pertain to Afro-Brazilian religious tradition. In *Album's* first procession a line of nuns, illuminated by blue backlighting, files across the upstage area in slow motion, to the sound of a Chopin Nocturne. The image suggests a timeless ritual, and the backlights create an oneiric effect by making the figures in the procession shadow-like. The nuns' movement is synchronized and rigid, accentuated by the "cold" blue light. Although in the script the wedding photo opens the play, Antunes Filho has inverted the order of the initial scenes, and the procession of nuns leads to Glória's first appearance on the stage, a lesbian scene with another pupil in a Catholic boarding school. The segment ends with a young boy ringing a bell and summoning the members of the wedding for the first photo. The bell, pertaining to the religious/ritualistic character of both the Catholic school and the wedding, bridges the gap between the two scenes.

For the marriage ritual, the wedding guests enter in formal dress, silently throw rice on Jonas and Senhorinha, and freeze downstage. The director dispenses here with the photographer indicated in the script, a comic, somewhat slapstick silent-movie figure, replacing him with the young boy. During the freeze the audience hears the comments of the Speaker, after which the actors perform an elegant waltz to the strains of the Blue Danube. The wedding atmosphere is broken by a scream from the future--Nonô--and the guests dance off stage.

Processionals accompany the third photo, Glória's Communion, with nuns chanting in Latin, and the funeral of Edmundo and Glória. In the latter scene, a line of veiled figures carries the coffins in slow motion, also to a Latin chant. The funeral procession moves directly into an amber spot that cuts directly across the stage. The golden light symbolizes both the glory of heaven and the burning of hell. The veiled pallbearers lean slightly in a grotesque position, as if blown backwards by the stream of light entering from the world beyond. In general, the sacred processions in the staging correspond to the rituals

that repeat the eternal cycle, communion, wedding, and funeral. They provide the visual frame for Nelson Rodrigues' mythic universe.

The director includes visual elements in the production not called for literally in the *Album* script but which are very effective. The first character to appear on stage, following the playwright's recorded story about his youth, is the young boy mentioned above. He represents the playwright himself in his boyhood and he appears throughout the production to direct the proceedings, a healthy and innocent counterpart to the madness and corruption surrounding him. As the vigorous and uncorrupted controller of the action, the puppeteer, he invites the other characters onstage and signals for lighting changes. In addition to arranging the photographs, he plays the role of Nonô in one of the family pictures before the child's innocence is turned into madness. For the final photo, the boy, as life-force, resuscitates Jonas, death-force, and playfully escorts Senhorinha onstage and organizes the entire ensemble for a last waltz. The final image, then, is one of exuberance and health, the moment of rebirth after death in the mythic cycle.

Other components of the visual frame are lighting, sets, and costumes. The lighting design is simple enough to be used for the three productions of the *rodízio* and for touring, yet flexible enough for special effects. It consists of white spots for general lighting, while colored gels are used for the oneiric sequences (e.g., the blue backlights and the amber light from the beyond). While the white lights establish clear and stark lines for realistic scenes, the colored "specials" blur those lines. The design provides an archetypal effect with a large circle of light utilized for the chapel scene with Edmundo and Glória, adding a candle to enhance the ritualistic atmosphere. The circle of light represents what Jung calls a *mandala*, a pictorial symbol of the collective unconscious whose form is usually round, an inner refuge from external difficulties. Edmundo and Glória's *mandala* is the chapel light where they retreat from the madness and horror, but their escape attempt fails, and Edmundo murders Glória in the darkness *outside the illuminated circle*.

The set is minimal: a long table and chairs. According to Sábato Magaldi the table represents the mythical center, linking heaven and earth.²¹ For many scenes the stage is bare. With the stark and simple set, the director continues the aesthetic he established for his 1979 production of *Macunaíma*. That is, he utilizes simple and inexpensive materials to create a Brazilian form of the Grotowskian "poor theatre." This aesthetic of poverty in the design mode is appropriate to third-world economic circumstances and allows the company to focus on the richness of imagination and creativity, of which there is an abundance in Brazil. Both the set and the period

costumes are in black and white. The color scheme reflects Nelson Rodrigues' interest in the early cinema, and its simplicity, purity, and elegance counterbalance the play's psychological and emotional complexity.²²

ALL NAKEDNESS WILL BE PUNISHED: STAGING

Grupo Macunaíma takes full advantage of the stage directions for *Nudez*, especially quick cutting from one setting and time frame to another, related to cinematic technique.²³ One scene may end in suspense while the next begins after the fact, after the violence has been committed, as when Herculano's brother Patrício gives him a bottle and a nude photo of the prostitute Geni to awaken the protagonist's dormant sexual instincts. In the next scene it is forty-eight hours later in a brothel, where Herculano sleeps off the effects of alcohol following his orgy with Geni. This cinematic jump-cutting provides a breath-taking pace and heightens the psychological tension and sexual violence that lurks just beneath the surface of the characters' actions. The dialogue adds to these effects. Short, crisp, and crackling, it snaps back and forth like gunshots or sword thrusts between the characters, who try always to manipulate or destroy each other. Lighting techniques also facilitate the quick cutting between scenes.

The set for *Nakedness*, like that for *Album*, is minimal, and lights are the principal means of setting the stage for the rapid-fire flashbacks and flash-forwards. In one scene change, for example, the lights cross-fade from Herculano and Geni, in one time and place, to the Aunts, in another time and place, and Herculano enters immediately into their now illuminated area. Such cross-fades are conventionally used within a single scene or setting, but Nelson Rodrigues and Antunes--use them to cut to new settings and time frames, forcing the audience to suspend its expectations based on theatrical illusion of reality and linear sequence of events. It is the lights, rather than the set, which define the scenic space. That is, instead of actors moving within a space delimited by a fixed set, space moves with the actors through the variations in lighting patterns. Because there are so many scene changes (over fifty), the conventional techniques of blackouts--used sparingly in the play--or other modes of time lapse would mean an extremely cumbersome production. A more subtle purpose for the jump-cut/cross-fade technique is to indicate emotional change. That is, the rhythm of the lighting changes varies according to emotional climate, speeding up, for example, when the characters are panicked or hysterical. During most of the second act and about halfway through the third act lighting changes define Herculano's voyage through the

universe of *Nakedness*. They establish the mood, speed, and even purpose of his movement through space and time. In one sequence the lights are on Geni, who is speaking on a public phone outside the protagonist's house; he enters her illuminated space; cross-fade to an Aunt, he enters immediately; cross-fade to Patrício, enter Herculano; cross-fade to Geni, enter the protagonist; a blackout breaks the tension of the repeated pattern. The pace of this series of cross-fades quickens as Herculano becomes more desperate and increasingly loses control of his life; when the tension is at its peak, it is cut off by the blackout. The pattern is then repeated until the end of the act, where it is again broken by a different lighting technique. The third act begins with the same pattern but soon presents a new variation, illuminating Geni's voyage to indicate that her destiny is at stake after she marries Herculano and becomes increasingly involved with his family. The last half of act three presents an array of varying patterns to indicate the chaos into which the protagonist's world is collapsing. Other techniques create effects and establish moods for specific scenes. The lights are used to create imaginary distances: Geni and Herculano, on opposite sides of the stage, each in a different light, talk on the phone. The lighting also creates time immobile. In one scene Geni's taped voice is heard while Herculano's son Patrício and the Aunts are frozen in a single spot. This suspension of time visually reinforces the production's mythic structure and in conjunction with the voice of the dead woman, Geni, who has committed suicide, refers to the timelessness of death.²⁴ In the last scene of *Nudez*, the lights come up on an empty bed; Geni speaks her final words and only the sound of the tape, now off the reel, is heard slapping as the lights dim. This image of stark loneliness and finality of death is reminiscent of the last scene in *Bridal Gown*, Alaíde's tomb in the moonlight.

What holds all the jump-cutting together is the device of Geni's last words recorded just before her suicide, a cinematic voice-over. Like the dying Alaíde in *Gown*, whose inner voice serves as a kind of narrator, Geni's voice from the beyond provides the narrative glue for *All Nakedness Will be Punished*. While the photographs and Speaker in *Album* provide a past-time frame for the present-time main action, Geni's recorded voice initiates the flash-backs that constitute the central portion of the plot. The snippets of tape reveal Geni's secret thoughts and provide the protagonist a view of events kept hidden from him while they transpired (e.g., Geni's affair with Serginho). And the recording adds to the play's mythical dimensions, in that it established a cyclical time frame, from Geni's death (the first words on the tape) to the death of Herculano's first wife (the beginning of the main action) and back to Geni's death (the end of the play). The

play ends with the tape reel spinning endlessly, an eternal return.

Several other elements of the visual frame distinguish Grupo Macunaíma's staging. Its minimal set consists of a few small tables, a bed, a row of chairs. The only "prop" is the all-important tape machine; the actors pantomime other objects. Costumes are in 1940's style, adding to the cinematic quality, in reference to American movies of the period, and placing the action in a period when social mores were more rigid in Brazil, when the events would be more shocking.

Blocking, when it does not adhere strictly to the stage directions, complements them. One of the most powerful recurring images is a group of young prostitutes, seated in a row of chairs facing the audience, a silent, watchful, and accusing Greek chorus. The production begins with the women entering the stage in line and taking their seats. In states of partial undress, they watch the audience. They are prostitutes in Geni's brothel, whose "Johns", the image suggests, are the audience members. A man comes on the stage--he will appear at several key moments in the production--and dances a tango with a young prostitute. The tango theme is repeated in varying patterns throughout the production. The most striking variation is the man dancing a lone tango, interrupted with freezes, in the upstage area, under the blue backlights. He may move when other tango dancers or actors in a dialogue scene are in a freeze, or he may freeze when others are dancing or speaking. During Herculano and Geni's wedding a group of women--the young prostitutes in another guise--dance a tango with the guests. The women carry flowers and are dressed semi-nude in black-tie costumes to parody the decorum and formality of the occasion. Near the end of the play the same group of women carries Geni's coffin onstage. As they kneel to pray, the lone tango dancer can be seen in the background. The tango establishes multifaceted effects and symbolism. It reinforces the forties motif suggested by the costumes. Its camp association parodies the solemnity and rigidity of Herculano's universe. It is the theme of the brothel--the mood of steamy sexuality--that constantly intrudes on the protagonist's ordered and puritanical system. The "Tango-man" represents the heart of the lonely dancer, to paraphrase a famous novel title, a poignant visual image (reinforced by the row of silent prostitutes) of the characters' loneliness and separation and of their failure to create bonds of love. Like the processions in *Album*, the tango has a mythic function. With its stylized movements and freezes, it is a recurring ritual, an anti-ritual really. The dance creates a sense of timelessness in its projection back to another period and parodies liturgical rituals of renewal, for it takes place in the sterile environment of the brothel, where sex does not recreate life nor express love, and it mocks the wedding ritual.

I conclude with a few words about Grupo Macunaíma. The company continues to fulfill the promise of the original production from which it took its name. It has kept alive the tradition of Os Comediantes in the 1940's, Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia in the 1950's, and Arena and Oficina in the 1960's. That is, Antunes Filho's group is currently Brazil's most important--perhaps only--theatre company capable of providing stability and continuity, training for actors, designers, and directors, and development of new forms of stagecraft. Its first three productions--*Macunaíma*, *Nelson 2 Rodrigues*, *Romeo e Julieta*--have toured extensively in Brazil and abroad and have won international acclaim. The company's most recent staging is entitled *Augusto Matraga* (1986) and is based on Guimarães Rosa's story "A Hora e a Vez de Augusto Matraga," with Raul Cortez, arguably the nation's finest actor, in the lead role. The stage adaptation of a Brazilian prose classic, like that of *Macunaíma*, demonstrates once again the group's bold dedication to theatrical innovation based on vital aspects of national culture.

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Notes

1. The article is entitled, "Os Comediantes and *Bridal Gown*."
2. Antunes began rehearsing six of Nelson Rodrigues' works for the 1981 production: *A Falecida* (*The Deceased Woman*), *Os Sete Gatinhos* (*The Seven Kittens*), *Boca De Ouro* (*Golden Mouth*), *O Beijo no Asfalto* (*Kiss on the Asphalt*), *Album de Família*, and *Todo Nudez Será Castigada*. Because the production would have lasted eight hours, by opening night he had cut *Falecida* and *Boca*. The final running time was four hours, reduced to two in the 1984 restaging.
3. Nelson Rodrigues, *Album de Família*, in *Teatro Completo*, Sábato Magaldi ed. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1981, 81. The translations of this and other quotes are mine.
4. Magaldi, *Teatro Completo*: 15.
5. Amália Zeitel, "Nelson Rodrigues, autor vital," program notes, *Nelson 2 Rodrigues*, São Paulo, 1984.
6. Zeitel.
7. Sábato Magaldi. "Nelson Rodrigues: Dramaturgia e Encenações." Tese de Livre-Docência. Universidade de São Paulo, 1983. 128.
8. Sábato Magaldi writes that the Carioca tragedy combines the archetypal dimensions of the mythic plays with the local color and concrete reality of Rio de Janeiro, in "Tese" 105.
9. Subsequent to Grupo Macunaíma's 1981 and 1984 stagings there has been a remarkable turnaround, for Nelson Rodrigues is now perhaps the most widely staged Brazilian playwright (outside the commercial theatre circuit). In the last few years there have been countless professional and amateur productions of his works. For example, in the São Paulo 1984 SESC theatre festival, in which I participated as a director, four of the nine entries were plays by Nelson Rodrigues. In past years

such festivals were dominated by productions of engagé works by Gianfrancesco Guarnieri and Augusto Boal. Nelson Rodrigues, considered a "reactionary," was usually snubbed.

10. "Nelson Rodrigues as filmed by Arnaldo Jabor," *Latin American Theatre Review* 16.1 (Fall 1982).

11. Zeitel.

12. My observations in this section are based on several viewings of *Nelson 2 Rodrigues* in São Paulo's Teatro Anchieta, April-June 1984.

13. Multiple role playing has a practical purpose as well. In 1984 Grupo Macunaíma instituted the *rodízio* system, which means three plays in repertory alternating on different evenings: *Nelson 2 Rodrigues*, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (*Romeo e Julieta*), and *Macunaíma*. The actors play many roles in the three productions, which provides training and flexibility in varied acting styles and characterization. With the *rodízio*, the company has attempted something taken for granted in the United States but almost unheard-of in Brazil: to encourage the public to purchase tickets ahead of time, a kind of capital investment in the company's future (theatres are always financially strapped in Brazil). For details about Antunes' collective methods, see my article, "The Staging of Macunaíma and the Search for National Theatre," *Latin American Theatre Review* 17.1 (Fall 1983).

14. Interview with Antunes Filho. São Paulo: March 18 1984.

15. Some amateur actors in *Nelson 2 Rodrigues* have difficulty with the characters' play of emotions, occasionally falling into the trap of false emotional expression and excessive shouting that distorts diction.

16. *Nudez* also begins with a recording of the playwright's voice.

17. "Tese" 61.

18. "Tese" 61.

19. "O vendaval Antunes." São Paulo: 25 April 1984.

20. See my article cited in note #12 above.

21. "Tese" 267.

22. Antunes has left out of the production an Expressionist device in the original script, a huge portrait of Jonas in the chapel, which depicts him with a cruel and bestial face (his guise as Nosferatu), yet at the same time he is Christ-like (Glória's vision of her father).

23. For an excellent study of Nelson Rodrigues and the cinema see Randal Johnson's article cited in footnote #10 above.

24. Time in the mythical conception does not move forward, it merely repeats that which existed in the beginning, it is suspended.