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Dehierarchizing Space: Performer-Audience Collaborations in Two Portuguese Performances of Shakespeare

Abstract: This article addresses the key role of performance space in mediating between cultural locations. It discusses two Portuguese performances of Shakespeare where audiences were invited to become part of the performance and the ways in which this dehierarchization of the performance space framed a cross-cultural encounter between a globalized text and a localized performance context. In Teatro Oficina's 2012 *King Lear*, both audience and performers sat around a large table in a production which reflected upon questions of individual and collective responsibility in Shakespearean tragedy and in the wider political sphere. In the middle of this performance space hung a large cube onto which the translated text was projected, setting up a spatial tension between text and performance that also foregrounded the translocation of the Shakespearean text to a Portuguese performance context. In Tiago Rodrigues' 2013 *By Heart*, ten members of the audience were invited onstage to learn Shakespeare's Sonnet 30 "by heart and not by brain."¹ In doing so, Rodrigues emphasized the cultural embeddedness of Shakespearean texts in a wider European cultural context and operated a subtle shift from texts to performance as a privileged repository for the cultural memory of Shakespeare. The article explores how these spatial shifts signaled the possibility of enabling cross-cultural identifications with Shakespeare through performance.

Keywords: Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Sonnet 30, performance space, audience participation.

The reenactment of centuries-old scripts serves
a communal function Henderson (35)

Shakespeare and European Togetherness

Amid the flurry of Shakespearean allusions around the Brexit referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union in 2016, the one that remained with me was in President of the European Council Donald Tusk's letter to members of

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¹ This expression was used in the publicity material for the performances.

the European Council, where he asked rhetorically “To be or not to be together, that is the question.” On one level, this was very obviously the question, but what sort of togetherness was Tusk proposing? Rather than operating as an equal partnership between nations, the European Union has increasingly functioned as an elite gentleman’s club that has reacted harshly to smaller, less powerful nations and more leniently to the larger and more powerful. Within member states, austerity programmes and inaction over the Syrian refugee crisis have exacerbated rifts between rich and poor and between immigrants, refugees and existing populations. The promiscuity between the Union and the financial services industry was clearly demonstrated when the former Portuguese President of the Commission, Durão Barroso, became a non-executive Director of Goldman Sachs, one of the institutions responsible for creating the 2008 international financial crisis. These are the contours of the neo-liberal model of European togetherness. Might Shakespearean performance offer an alternative way of being together within Europe?

As a series of crises have dismantled state-funded art, performances that promise a more active role for their audiences have increased in the last few years. Artists have been keen to make use of such strategies to reinvigorate the theatrical experience and to promote social cohesion, while programmers have been more concerned with using them to enhance the marketing of performances and government funders have been keen to exploit their ability to reduce performance costs.² Looking back on a decade of work by the British immersive theatre company Punchdrunk, Andrew Eglinton notes that in “a society driven by networked digital technology and real time media (...) new ‘frames’ of performance continue to emerge in the public domain, rendering discourses of theatre reliant on the proscenium structure even less stable” (49).³ These new frames of performance have fundamentally reshaped relationships between audiences and performers. Like interactive information and communication technologies, to which such performances are a direct response, they promise greater participation and decision-making for the audience while masking the

² In the last round of funding for theatre in Portugal, for instance, 5 out of the 19 funded theatre projects were projects that worked with the community as active participants. My thanks to Luís Mestre for providing me with this information.

³ Punchdrunk’s immersive theatre version of *Macbeth, Sleep no More* (2011-) was a highly successful production that promised its audiences an individualized theatrical experience. Critical discussion of the performances has focused on the performance’s non-linear narrative and the difference between the marketing of the performances and the reality for spectators. In her review, for instance, Colette Gordon points to the distance between the marketing of the event and the event itself: “*SNM* presented itself as a kind of duck-rabbit picture, always flickering between two positions: the picture of active, immersive theatre it promises us or the safe, acquiescent entertainment experience this disavows”(45).

fact that the ability to act is invariably circumscribed and the participation proposed tends to be more often a space in which to *react* rather than to act.⁴ Nevertheless, for these very reasons, concerns about where and how the audience appear in performance constitute a faultline⁵ around which questions not only of theatrical but also political democracy are negotiated, for they foreground the right of an audience to be present in and to act within the public sphere. Rancière's call for the emancipation of the spectator has often been reduced to greater physical participation by audiences in performance. Moreover, a simplistic contrast between passive spectatorship and a lack of engagement on the one hand and active spectatorship with greater engagement with performance on the other tends to obscure the ways in which modes of spectating range across these binaries in performance. The emancipation of the spectator represents, rather, a critical tool for democratising performance in its exploration of alternatives to the globalised, monocultural interactivity promoted by neo-liberal media and to political disenfranchisement in the public sphere.

This article looks at two Portuguese performances of Shakespeare that deliberately encouraged greater participation from their audiences as a response to the difficulties of creating and maintaining new audiences for Shakespeare and to wider democratic entrenchment in Europe. It examines what was entailed for audiences in the movement away from what Shakespeare *is* to what Shakespeare *does*, and from performance as event to performance as experience. It emphasizes in particular the ways in which the dehierarchization of the performance space in these two productions played a key role in mediating between cultural locations through the tension between a globalized text and a localized performance context. In this way, the performances encouraged the possibility of cross-cultural identifications beyond the parameters of nation states with fixed borders and rehearsed new possibilities of being and working together within a European context.

⁴ Although this discussion of the audience is framed in connection with digital technologies because of the concern with interactivity, contemporary audience expectations are also conditioned by their participation in other areas. In his discussion of spectatorship, for instance, Dennis Kennedy examines not only spectating in theatre and performance, but also in television, sport, ritual, tourism and gambling. Such intermedial experiences help to define what is constructed as the audience's experience within particular performances of Shakespeare.

⁵ The term is used by Alan Sinfield for whom it is central to his focus on dissidence in Shakespearean texts. For Sinfield, "dissident potential derives ultimately (...) from conflict and contradiction that the social order inevitably produces within itself, even as it attempts to sustain itself." (41) Faultlines appear at the interfaces of conflict and contradictions. In the case of audience participation, the faultline is created through the conflict between the appeal to them as individual consumers and the suggestion that such participation also promotes wider social and political transformation.

Sit Down Next To Me: Teatro Oficina's *King Lear* (2012)

People sitting down together at the same table carries with it multiple intercultural associations, including feasting, political negotiation or the religious imagery of the Last Supper. These different associations were brought into play in the 2012 *King Lear* directed by Marcos Barbosa for Teatro Oficina in the northern Portuguese city of Guimarães. Although this was not Barbosa's first Shakespeare, as he had already directed a *Macbeth* in 2011, the choice of a Shakespeare play on this occasion owed much to the fact that Guimarães was European Capital of Culture in 2012. As such, the performance of Shakespeare played a key role in the definition of what constituted contemporary European culture. It also worked to consolidate the reputation of this local company on a national level, linking the local, the national and the European.⁶

This particular staging of *Lear* came after performers from Teatro Oficina had worked on the play earlier in the year with Japanese actors in Fukushima following the earthquake and tsunami there. Barbosa was struck by the way in which working with *Lear* prompted communication across language barriers in the context of these tragic events. He returned to Portugal wanting to stage a performance that paid homage to this intercultural experience, but that also intervened in the more local forms of suffering resulting from prolonged economic austerity in Portugal, especially the pressures this was creating on family structures. He worked with the company to create a contemporary theatrical ritual where audiences might participate in a shared reflection on the continuing relevance of the Shakespearean play in a globalized context of media definitions of tragedy and their tendency to cast spectators as passive observers.

In response to notions of tragedy which privilege images of distant victims and indifferent observers, Barbosa sought to use *Lear* to create a performance which emphasized individual and collective responsibility in responding to tragic events. In this way, he also sought to redefine *Lear* as a contemporary political tragedy and thus to rediscover audiences for the play within Portugal. Advocacy of individual responsibility in relation to tragic events is complex under neo-liberal regimes, which tend to personalize even major world events and to elevate notions of individual responsibility over notions of collective rights.⁷ However, the communal nature of the theatrical ritual created by the company went some way towards linking individual and

⁶ The performance was awarded an honourable mention by the Portuguese Association of Critics in the same year indicating how the performance brought this local company a national reputation.

⁷ This emphasis on individual responsibility should, nevertheless, be seen within a cultural context where the Portuguese political class is notorious for evading such responsibilities.

collective responsibility within a more political understanding of why tragic events occur and why societies fail to respond to them.

A key element of the performance in this respect was the organization of the performance space (Figure 1). As the audience entered, they were ushered to their places at four adjoining tables by performers who then sat down among them. There was immediately an atmosphere of expectation created by this breaking down of spatial barriers between performers and audience, while the performers' use of casual modern dress reinforced the sense that there was little outward distinction in status between them. This setting also suggested a link between a dehierarchization of the performance space and an alternative organization of social space, locating both Shakespeare and *Lear* within these more democratic notions of public space rather than as elite cultural artefacts which ordinary citizens are unable to access. When the play began, performers placed before them the kind of wooden name block that might appear at international meetings of the UN or meetings between European Finance Ministers and which here identified the character(s) they were playing (Figure 2), while other performers moved behind the tables whispering to the audience that *Lear* was about to enter. In this way, members of the audience were encouraged to view this shared space as a site for a globally-informed debate in which they were expected to engage rather than be simple observers.

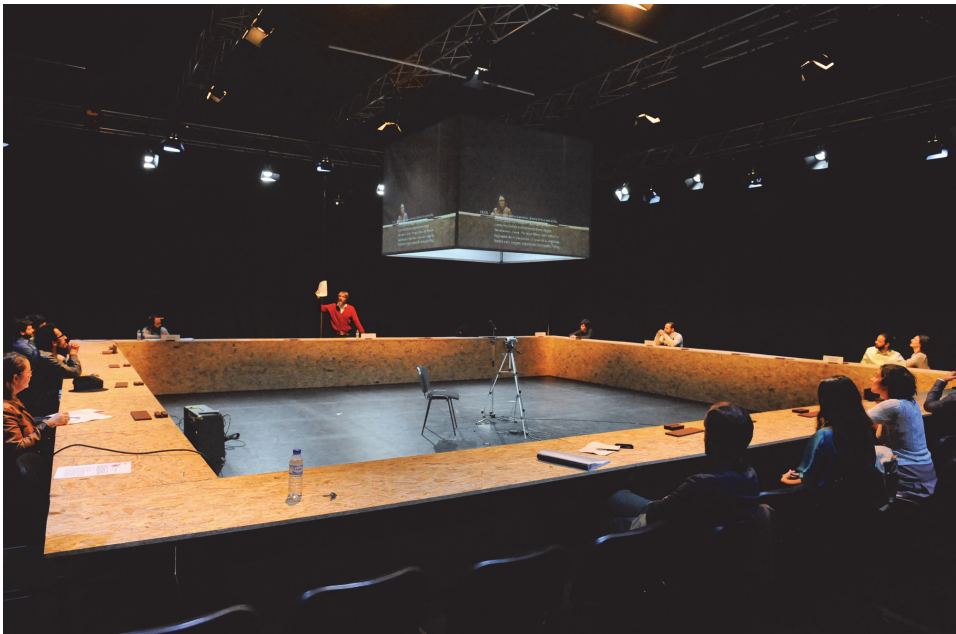


Figure 1. Rehearsal for *Rei Lear*. Courtesy of Marcos Barbosa and the Centro Cultural Vila Flor



Figure 2. Hugo Torres in rehearsal as Lear in *Rei Lear*. Courtesy of Marcos Barbosa and the Centro Cultural Vila Flor

After this initial outline of the performance context and the role of the audience within it, Lear entered with his Court. Yet the nervous laughter and jocular atmosphere that began Lear's love test soon gave way to a fiery exchange between Lear and Kent as the collective ritual fragmented. As Lear's world collapsed, a series of questions were raised by the audience's presence at the table: Should they have intervened to stop this incipient tragedy? What could they have done? Why did they do nothing? What are the obstacles to more active intervention in such tragedies?

Throughout the performance, the text of *Lear*, in an excellent translation by Fernando Villas Boas, was present as both spoken and written text, as the translation was projected onto a large cube hanging above the performance space. The presence of the cube thus introduced a tension between the spoken and the written word that foregrounded the fact that the translocation of *Lear* as a global, anglophone text into the local Portuguese performance context was not limited to translation of the text but occurred across diverse performance registers. Moreover, as well as having to constantly switch body positions in order to follow events on all four sides of the table and to peer over the tables at events that took place in the middle of the tables, the audience also moved between the projected text up above them and the performance taking place

before them. In this way, greater theatrical enjoyment was linked with greater physical and mental participation, reinforcing the performance's emphasis on the importance of mobilizing individual and collective responsibility.⁸ There were also moments when sections of the performance were projected onto the screen in stark black and white imagery, interrupting the projection of the text and doubling moments of the performance below. Edgar's "I nothing am" speech (2:2:172-192), for instance, was a haunting instance of the power of images to disturb the flow of performance and to prompt reflection on the part of the audience rather than a simple acceptance of the unfolding of a singular performance narrative. By bringing digital technology into the performance arena, the production skilfully negotiated the competition Shakespearean performance is experiencing from such global technologies by creating a hybrid form of mediated performance that was both conditioned by, but also represented an alternative to, such technologies. While acknowledging that such an interaction inevitably fractures the viewing experience of the audience and tends towards privatizing individual reactions, technology was mobilized to encourage the audience to see and feel *Lear* differently and to become aware of those around them in the performance space. It encouraged a range of perspectives on the play among its audiences rather than reinforcing a homogenous understanding of it. Combined with the organization of the stage space, this was the most political element of the performance, as it dislodged conventional notions of witnessing Shakespearean tragedy from a distance and rendered it a physically, emotionally and intellectually engaging experience.

However, some of the performance decisions seemed to qualify the central role that the audience were given in this ritualized performance. Using the text projected onto the cube, members of the audience were asked to play the minor roles of the servant and the doctor. What power did these moments have to alter the course of the performance? Were they not excessively 'safe', essentially reactive options for audience participation? The limitations of the performance's call to audience participation were most evident towards the end of the performance when the actor playing Edmund asked an audience member to hold the rope that was hanging Cordelia (5:3). In the first performance I saw, this request was met with lame acceptance as if such an action had no real consequence on the outcome of the tragedy or on the social spaces modelled by the performance.⁹ In the second performance, the rope was left lying on top of

⁸ Such shifts could also, evidently, have created a certain amount of disorientation in the audience, but it was not essential to always vary perspective in this way in order to follow the narrative of the play.

⁹ There were two separate productions of the play in two different locations. The first production took place at a restored warehouse, Fábrica Asa, in Guimarães. The second production took place at the Teatro de Almada, just across the river from Lisbon.

the table as if to say: ‘I might not be intervening to stop this, but I will not be your hangman either’. This suggested that even if the audience felt this was still not in any real sense their performance, there was at least a perception that their participation might take the form of a refusal to take part. The paralysis of the audience here may have been due to the entanglement of the public in what Kate McLuskie and Kate Rumbold refer to as “the central confusion about whether the public should speak for themselves as individual consumers, or speculate, as citizens, about what is good for others” (147). Members of the audience remained unsure of whether they were to respond as individuals or as part of a temporary collective and whether they were allowed to intervene freely within the performance or only in the places explicitly signalled by the performers.

Besides the relegation of the audience to minor roles, the performance often resorted to theatrical tricks to keep the audience entertained, such as when Gloucester’s eye rolled perversely down the table like an eerie marble or the inclusion of a roller-skating Fool. While they were certainly entertaining, such tricks suggested a certain lack of faith in the audience’s ability to engage with the play, despite the insistence on the importance of the presence of the audience for the success of the ritual. The performance invited audiences to participate selectively and potentially to reflect on *Lear*’s role as a political tragedy, but the audience’s ability to co-create the performance remained an essentially individual experience. More importantly, while participation in the performance prompted a feel good factor in the audience, this came into conflict with the tragic genre of the play, for the conventions of the genre pre-empted the possibility of the audience intervening in a significant way to prevent the tragic outcome.

“Even Elsinore Will Need a Footnote”: Performance Space and European Cultural Memory in Tiago Rodrigues’ *By Heart* (2013)

Tiago Rodrigues’ *By Heart* gave more weight to audience participation than the *Lear* discussed in the previous section. It was based on the affirmation by George Steiner that “once 10 people know a poem by heart, there is nothing that the KGB, the CIA or the Gestapo can do about it. It will survive”.¹⁰ The poem in question here was Shakespeare’s Sonnet 30 which Rodrigues taught to ten

Audiences for Capital of Culture events in Guimarães were perhaps more heterogeneous than audiences for the Teatro de Almada performance. Moreover, in the period between the two performances, the artists involved had more time to work on elements of the play, particularly a certain imbalance in the acting styles of the performers.

¹⁰ This phrase is taken from the publicity for the performance, which is available at <http://www.houseonfire.eu/by-heart>

people during the course of the performance. Sonnet 30 is centrally concerned with questions of memory and loss:

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste. (44)

While foregrounding Sonnet 30 in particular, Rodrigues also introduced a series of linked narratives around the theme of memory. The most extensively developed of these concerned Rodrigues' grandmother Cândida who was going blind and needed her grandson to choose a book for her to memorize before her sight disappeared. Other narratives included excerpts from Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) about the physical destruction of literary memory and the story of Pasternak's intervention at the Soviet Writer's Congress in 1937 Stalinist Russia where he relied on the audience's knowledge of Sonnet 30 to challenge the regime.¹¹ Each of these stories reinforced the central importance of memory as a political tool against enforced forgetting. They also located Shakespeare firmly within a European context of narratives dealing with cultural memory rather than within a canonical Anglophone dramatic tradition, as the writing of the Shakespeare's Sonnets was also located within a wider European context of influence and exchange.¹²

Reinforcing the focus on the European, Rodrigues explained that the performance had been inspired by Rodrigues' fascination with a George Steiner interview on a Dutch television channel. This interview dealt with the loss of cultural references in contemporary societies, with Steiner counterposing his own disciplined, literary memory to these processes of loss.¹³ However, Steiner's nostalgic discourse in this interview sat rather awkwardly with the determinedly presentist approach of Rodrigues' performance where the importance of individual and cultural memory lay in its current use value rather than in its past or future relevance. Rodrigues claimed that the Steiner interview

¹¹ For a stimulating account of Pasternak's relationship with Shakespeare, see Grob.

¹² *By Heart* has been performed in a variety of European locations. As well as the published Portuguese version of the play, unpublished English and French translations of the play also exist which have been used for these European performances. The indebtedness of the original Sonnets to European influences is most evident in the influence of Petrarch.

¹³ At the beginning of this interview, Steiner has his back to the audience as he seeks a book in his bookcase. He then reads an excerpt from Hemingway as a prelude to voicing his concern at the loss of common cultural references in the contemporary world. He contrasts his own experiences of training his memory to learn things by heart to this loss, noting that soon "Even Elsinore will need a footnote". See the Youtube reference to the television series "Beauty and Consolation" in the bibliography.

encouraged him to write to Steiner asking for a book suggestion for his grandmother. Steiner seems not to have replied, but Rodrigues chose the Sonnets for his grandmother to memorize. Such a choice reinforced the continuing significance of Shakespeare as a poet as well as a dramatist within the Portuguese context. Later in the performance, Rodrigues had Cândida validate this choice of a poem over other forms of narrative “Over the phone, she told me I had chosen well. If it had been a novel, there was the risk she would become blind before reaching the end of the story. Then, she would be condemned to spend the rest of her life without knowing how it ended” (15).

Of course, it was impossible to tell which elements of this narrative were fictional and which were fact. Rodrigues presented himself to the audience in casual dress and spoke what resembled a script, but which was also colloquial and open to improvisation. As such, it became impossible to distinguish performer from persona and autobiography from theatrical fiction, traits that are characteristic of the post-dramatic performance style Rodrigues favours. In this way, the performance also problematized the binaries of live and mediated, spontaneous and staged, authentic and contrived and introduced elements of chance and risk into an otherwise scripted performance. As Clare Bishop argues, in such projects, the performance is seen “less as a finite, portable, commodifiable product” than “an ongoing or long-term project with an unclear beginning and end” (2). It is in this context that Tiago Rodrigues began the performance with the following words:

Good evening. There are ten chairs on this stage.
 I need ten people from the audience to sit on these chairs. These ten spectators will learn a text by heart.
 A short text. Easy to learn. Rather easy. Not too easy. You can do it.
 You won't have to act. You won't have to do anything out of the ordinary.
 It will be very normal and calm. You'll just have to learn a few words by heart.
 I won't manipulate you in any way. And if I do manipulate you, it will be with tenderness.
 The performance will only start after the chairs have been taken.
 Thank you. (Rodrigues, 1) (Figure 3)

The ironic reassurance that nobody would be manipulated and that the task was well within the audience's grasp distinguished this invitation to participate from previous generations of performers for whom the objective tended to be to challenge and shock the audience rather than reassure them. However, there might well be less of a distance between such ‘tender’ manipulation and earlier more radical experiments with audience participation than might appear at first glance. Beneath this comforting message, the demands placed on the audience in learning Sonnet 30 onstage were physically and intellectually taxing. The fact that the performance relied entirely on its audience to begin and on their ability



Figure 3. Tiago Rodrigues' *By Heart*. Courtesy of Magda Bizarro and Mundo Perfeito

to learn the Sonnet to end granted them the role of co-creators of a section of the performance along with Rodrigues, a more substantial role than that envisaged for the audience that participated in the *Lear* discussed earlier.

Whereas the organization of the stage space in *Lear* tended to promote a more homogeneous view of the audience, the ten different chairs on which the participants in *By Heart* sat encouraged a sense of their heterogeneity. Rodrigues did, however, use a higher stool that set him above the other participants, reinforcing his role as controller of the theatrical situation. He patiently taught the participants the lines of the Sonnet in a highly literary translation by Vasco Graça Moura, making visible performance techniques for memorizing lines as he did so. As he taught them, there were spontaneous opportunities for humour with the onstage and wider audience. He gave the participants breaks as he told the other stories and reminded them to drink water so as not to become dehydrated. The performance thus seems exemplary in that with care, compassion and humour, the task Rodrigues and the audience set out to do was achieved by the end of the performances and the audience went home with a gift – Sonnet 30 learnt “by heart and not by brain.”¹⁴

¹⁴ This opposition was present in the publicity material for the performances and reoccurred throughout the script for the performance.

The central opposition between heart and brain that underpinned the performance recalled Steiner's emphasis on the power of memory, but gave it a new twist, for it cast live performance rather than literature as the privileged repository for cultural memory and emphasized the importance of collective as well as individual memory. The opposition also functioned as an implicit critique of teaching Shakespeare in educational contexts that rely more on the brain than the heart. The performance set itself up as an alternative forum for teaching and learning Shakespeare, concentrating on the immediate acquisition of a Shakespeare product in pleasurable surroundings. Yet the type of learning it advocated seemed little different from the rote learning that modern educationalists strove to remove from the Shakespeare classroom because of its emphasis on repetition rather than genuine understanding.¹⁵

There are two points worth mentioning in this context. When the performance premiered in Lisbon, Rodrigues taught the entire Sonnet to each of the ten participants. As the tour progressed, however, he taught each participant just one line of the Sonnet that it was their responsibility to memorize as part of the collective recitation of the poem. This change occurred presumably because an entire sonnet was too difficult for each participant to memorize during the course of the performance. Secondly, when I asked my student-performers to remember the Sonnet they had learnt a week or so later, only isolated lines remained. They had made sure they remembered their particular line during the performance. However, they promptly forgot the Sonnet as soon as the performance was over.¹⁶ As such, rather than representing a more effective alternative to academic learning, the performance was very much a product of the same circumstances and subject to the same 'need to know' mentality. Indeed, the crates full of books on the stage had a rather nostalgic feel to them, reminiscent of the end of book culture rather than its healthy resuscitation.

In *By Heart*, Rodrigues foregrounded the question of the disappearance of European cultural memory in the global digital age, claiming a space for localized performance as a pedagogical arena for remembering what digital technologies encourage their users to believe they can remember better. What

¹⁵ Rodrigues implied a distinction between the learning by heart within educational contexts which is motivated by duty and obedience and the learning by heart of the performer which is cast as disinterested, but how stable is this opposition when such learning by heart by performers is often as enforced as that within educational establishments and where modern educational theories more often stress the active learning of students? Moreover, the implied distinction between the academic and the performative here relies on a reductionist and outdated view of Shakespeare in the classroom.

¹⁶ They did, however, remember the personal narrative about Rodrigues' grandmother Cândida, whose function within the performance had been as an aide-memoir to the Sonnet but which instead became the primary narrative in the long term.

the performance did achieve was to make the participants really want to learn the Sonnet, because the success of the performance and of themselves as performers was bound up with such an investment. It also made the participants in the performance feel that they were capable of such a task, unlike more formal education in Shakespeare which often emphasizes the need for extended labour on the part of the students in order to properly engage with his work. The performance thus represented an adroit intervention in what Kate McLuskie and Kate Rumbold have referred to as “the latest phase in a long-running contest [between academics and theatre practitioners] over the authority to manage the social relations in which Shakespeare would be assimilated into culture” (122). Its differential selling point was its claim to teach Shakespeare immediately and effectively, giving participants a product that could be taken home and remembered as a way of individually and collectively maintaining Shakespeare at the heart of European cultural memory. It was highly successful in the former, less so in the latter, for the present-centred paradigm with which Rodrigues works tends to neglect the ways in which notions of European cultural memory and of Shakespeare are subject to transformation and contestation over time. The choice of a Shakespearean sonnet rather than a play at the heart of this performance is in itself symptomatic of the fragments of Shakespeare that currently circulate in a globalized media culture combining, as in this performance, with other non-Shakespearean fragments to which they are only indirectly related. In this sense, the pedagogical discourse around the need to keep Shakespeare within European cultural memory confronted the material realities of the disappearing performance act and, in the process, reinforced essentially nostalgic views of the role of Europe and Shakespearean texts.

Performance Space and Cross-Cultural Identification

Invitations to the audience to collaborate in performance were, in both these cases, well-intentioned provocations to thinking and feeling differently about Shakespearean performance in Portugal. Both experimented with rethinking the role of Shakespeare and, in this way, sought also to create new audiences for Shakespeare in the twenty-first century. Both were built around an excellent central trope and sought to use performance as a pedagogical forum in which to introduce audiences to Shakespeare without feeling the need to rewrite or adapt the Shakespearean texts in the process. There was a certain lack of trust in audience participation in *Lear*, while there was an exaggeration of the potential of *By Heart* to effect more sustained change.

A key question in thinking through the political effects of such collaborations concerns the modelling of a connection between performance space and the wider public sphere. The inclusion of the audience within

a dehierarchized performance space pointed to their lack of active participation in theatre as well as in other spheres, particularly those of politics and education. However, the performances could not emphasize this exclusion too strongly without pointing to the limitations of the participation they themselves offered as alternatives. In the case of *Lear*, participants were not encouraged to intervene beyond the performance moments in which such intervention was explicitly signalled. In the case of *By Heart*, the concentration on the present moment belied the interest in the staging of memory as a political tool for remembering the European past and, especially, for thinking through its future. In other words, the relationship between performance space and social space in these two performances was as much about reciprocal mystification as reciprocal elucidation, particularly around questions of democratic participation. Indeed, it could be argued that it was at the very moment that the potential of this dehierarchized space emerged most strongly, whether through the seating arrangements in *Lear* or the onstage responsibilities of *By Heart*, that the wider political possibilities of such a shared space receded.

It is in this context also that the productions made use of the shared performance space to promote cross-cultural identifications. The spectre of Fukushima haunted Teatro Oficina's *Lear* and was mentioned explicitly in the performance's publicity material. Rodrigues' *By Heart* drew attention to geopolitical references ranging from Pasternak's Russia to a Dutch television channel within a context where invariably peripheral Portuguese experiences were made central to contemporary definitions of Shakespeare and the European. Such cross-cultural identifications complicated the notion of Anglophone Shakespearean texts being transposed to Portuguese contexts. Instead, Shakespearean texts and performances were situated as global products with multiple local resonances. Similarly, audiences were encouraged to identify not only with the Portuguese, but also the Russian, the Dutch, the English and the Japanese within an expanded notion of what constitutes contemporary Shakespearean performance in Portugal. While such possibilities for cross-cultural identification were momentary and fragmentary, they did enable all those included within the performance space to experience, however temporarily, a more democratic sense of European togetherness.

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