

**How to quote this text:** Yacoubi, A. H. 2012. "GHITA NO BRASIL" The representation of space in Ghita, Translated from spanish by Bryan Brody, VIRUS, [online] n. 8. Available at: <<http://www.nomads.usp.br/virus/virus08/?sec=5&item=4&lang=en>> [Accessed 00 Month 0000]



## **"GHITA NO BRASIL" The representation of space in Ghita**

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*In 2010 Eduardo Okamoto, with a group of students from Celia Helena School in the city of Sao Paulo, revived a voice that was fading, my own, using one of my texts, Ghita. From this same experience came the project "Ghita in Brazil" (Ghita no Brasil), in charge of which would be Eduardo Okamoto and the As Barbaras Multeatro Company (project considered for the 2011 María Muñoz Funarte Theater Award [Premio Funarte de Teatro María Muñoz 2011]). These, in addition to translating the work with a delicacy that borders on the sublime, were responsible for bringing me to Brazil with the goal that I, through my work or my work through me, could be reborn again.*

*This project in itself involves me once again setting foot upon and breathing the dust of a stage; to design the space with a light, a silence, a word, a movement or a gesture; to appreciate the smile and the sweat of an actor or actress who is giving his or her soul so that a voice, in which I include my own, is strongly heard ... Only once the creation process had begun, together with Eduardo Okamoto and the As Barbaras Multeatro Company, did I feel the force of all that was happening around me. I guess it was an awakening of that other self I craved, above all things – to open my chest and speak, writing the scene and with it, to rewrite a culture and a theater.*

This creative process parts from the reflection – as this is one of the objectives of the aforementioned project that considers an exchange between Brazil and Morocco – on how to articulate and represent the space of two cultures such as Brazil and Morocco which, of themselves and in their essences, are multidimensional, not to mention, and you'll pardon the redundancy, multicultural.

There are many important aspects that have emerged from this process start, obviously all related to the representation of valid elements in the culture to which belongs the author and director, and those other team members involved in realization of the project, such as Eduardo Okamoto, chief and guide for the project; the three actresses from the As Barbaras Multeatro Company; the director of photography, Leo Grego; Vitor Moreira, Arthur Tuco and Rui Hehaka, responsible for the creation of music; Alice Stamato and Rachel Fortes, both art directors; as well as and Silvio Favaro and Eduardo Colombo, lighting technician and body preparation, respectively.

Although the staging of the show is still in its preliminary stages, or in other words, in the beginnings of its process, the thus far observable contributions are nonetheless relevant and already reveal the richness of the project as concerning the issue of multiculturalism. However, in this article, for reasons of space, I focus only on the representation of theatrical space in *Ghita* that, somehow, also involves the representation of that space we can call transcultural.

I must say that in the prestaging step, a deeper reading of the text was performed in order to highlight the mechanisms that would come into play for the representation of space based on two aspects that I considered fundamental and which I shall describe below:

The first relates to the multidimensionality of a single character, as it is a work heavy in monologues. And the second is related to the staging of the space which, in this work and due to its being a form heavy in monologues, is complex due to the treatment that is made from the space-time coordinates.

*Ghita* collects the experiences of a single character who finds herself locked up in a mental hospital for 30 years. This guiding idea suggests that the space and time categories signify confinement and absence, or in other words, it is about the space of oppression. Theatre of oppression is a prison, and *Ghita*, as the character calls herself in a good part of the work, hence the title, is a name of freedom and oppressed women. It is a physical prison – the prison of an individual's own body; the prison of speech contained like a cry which, in this text and as a metaphor, explains the space of insanity or madness.

So the reader or creator is facing a complex compositional structure:

- The actor unfolds into a character – the actor who appears at the beginning of the play unfolded into a woman, *Ghita* (in the asylum).
- The character is split into different characters. The splitting process happens as a sliding process by which the character occupies and vacates different territories: *Ghita* occupies Mehdi, who in turn occupies the father and the mother and is a woman.

Because of this, in *Female Drama in the Maghreb* (2012, pp. 105), a study of my own making in which I devote a chapter to this work, I highlight the following:

The dramatic text alludes through much of the stage directions to a real space which is that of the stage, specifying how it is to be used; it also refers to a fictional space, that of the fable (which is an area to which, at the time of the performance, must be alluded to, in turn, through the real space of the stage). That fictional space refers to a greater or lesser extent to a reality: the actor is a real person, and refers to a scene, although other parts of the story may not relate to actual locations that occur in the character's mind [...] The open places, even alluded to or evoked by the memory of a character, are as "real" in the world of fables as are those that are realized on the stage, while, on the other hand, on the stage we can materialize places not already evoked by the memory of a character, but that exist only in the imagination of that character. It happens in this case that the personality of the Woman or her reverie leads her to imagine spaces that, within the "reality" of fiction, are themselves fictitious. They would be doubly fictitious, because besides being the author's imagination, they come from the imagination of the character. The question is how to express these two spatial levels using elements of the stage (Yacoubi, 2012, pp. 296).

One of these levels is the theatrical stage itself, which places the viewer in a mental hospital; the other is a mental, staged or extrascenic time-space, which is broader than the scenic discourse: the time that has passed since grandpa's War and the thirty years before August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1998 (the time of the story) is represented during the duration of the show (real time).

The method meets the need to adjust time in order to visualize the confinement and oppression of generations included under the semantic label of *Ghita's* family, and in turn, the space/madness occupied by *Ghita*. This evocation is carried out by reversing the linearity of time, thus contributing to the fragmentation of the text in that it breaks the space-time continuity, like in the thought process of the character. "Evoking these fictional places (which fit into the character's mind) is absolutely necessary to rebuild a real/unreal world that gives meaning to the drama" (Yacoubi, 2012, pp. 297).

Memories arise as disordered thoughts. Because of this, and considering that space and time categories have a multiplicity that suggest other real/fictional spaces, in addition to music, dance, painting and photography, the use of other resources have become necessary, such as: the off and film techniques as languages that show what to me constitutes the brain mechanism. That is to say, they serve to represent what the brain processes as memory or recollection. This memory can be real in the sense that it is a reality experienced by the character, or it can be imagined by the character as an illusion or hallucination, as this is a reaction caused by taking the supplied medications.

Specifically, this being a work of an experimental style, the creator/reader is awarded the primary function of free creator, as Okamoto says in "*Ghita*, A Drama of Affect" "*Ghita*, uma dramaturgia do afeto" (2011, pp. 150). He says:

It is curious to realize that her mere writing, in a way, materializes this dialogical potential. Structured as a non-linear narrative - like memory, with comings and goings in time, mistakes and misunderstandings, revisions and new points of view on the events – the drama of *Aicha* is very open to interaction with artists who intend it interpret it. That is, there are many, many ways of bringing the text to the stage. The very evolution of the writing indicates the transformations that the author expects of the world. The format the work is ultimately as politicized as its discourse: not morally encapsulating one sense, it liberates the senses (Okamoto, 2011, pp. 150-151).

Because of this, I can say that it is a piece of writing that is open to material, aesthetic and ideological possibilities for the creator/reader, which when staging the work can make use of various and transdisciplinary techniques. For the

staging underway in Brazil, we have used the cinematic text; similarly, we consider the use of this resource as a spatial-temporal extension of the realization of *Ghita*. In other words, it is a case of cinema serving theater.

This obviously has made possible a human team that dominates both disciplines, thanks to which we are able to carry out the experiment respecting what was already implicitly imbued and explicitly written in the text: the use of projected images on a screen.

It was such that as a stage previous to the staging of *Ghita*, I had to imagine a scenic space that was essentially unlimited and that could include other limits than those afforded by a stage in the Italian style or by a theater/stage division. The fourth wall disappears both for the audience and for the actor. This aspect can be observed through the spatial disposition of the actor and through his discourse, and therefore implies the negation of the illusory effect to achieve other ideological goals. Only by violating the limits of the stage can one manage to release the character's memories, mental spaces produced by the dissociation of personality, the conflict, the physical violence contained in speech.

The use of the screen and the voice offstage serve to divide the space in which open/closed, large/small and bright/dark locations are combined, spacial text being determined by the category of time. The intention is that time does not become an obstacle so one can identify one era with another, the present with the past. The absorption of real time by fictional (dreamed) time occurs. Hence, we can speak of spaces within space [...] The space that creates the work and displays the present action is multiple as it includes: the room of asylum, and those that are dormant or contiguous, shown theatrically with sound effects, the screen and the deictics (Yacoubi, 2012, pp. 298).

As is explicit in the aforementioned study, the screen "recreates the architecture of the theater in a distinct way to the notion of room/scene. Independently of this vision, it also designates the memory space, in this case unique to the character, and that of a group that is the world. The display is a sign within another sign, i.e., the scene is a sign of the world and at the same time, the screen is a sign of the scene that represents this world "(Yacoubi, 2012, pp. 299).

The audience lives the experience from within, since from the beginning of the show the actor-character (in this case three actresses) goes with her forefinger to the screen like the gap through which air can be breathed. This gap, a crack in the oppressive space, takes a significant spatial dimension both for the audience and for the actor-character, as it represents a break with the established system (including space). It becomes the opening to a possibly virtual world, but also an opening in which each viewer can build that image of the world to which he aspires.

The objective is to transmit, spread, impregnate with this spider web that the memory of the character constructs, his moments of lucidity or madness; a way of showing like any other, and thus succeeding in transporting the viewer through the body, voice and other scenic elements, but also by the use of cinema in the theater. With one assisting the other, in this case, the film text beings to constitute an extension of the character's mind, but also of the scene. With this application, we integrate extrascenic spaces and times, which become part of one space: the real space of the theater and as such materialized in the performance space and also the one that represents the character's consciousness or what Octavio Mannoni (1979) calls "the other stage".

And to conclude, following this line of thinking, in the "Ghita no Brasil" process, further exploration of the interaction between the two texts is being carried out: the discourse of the screen (film text created expressly for this show. And I repeat, it is a continuity of real space (scenery) and fictional space (mental space of the character), and what I the three actresses (As Barbarian Multeatro) articulate, thus creating one homogeneous text despite being hybrid in composition.

In turn, this would not have been possible without reflection, also previous, concerning the design of the set. In this regard, the purpose has been as I said above, to design an unlimited space, except a spatial continuum. And at the same time, to maintain a minimalist aesthetic, seeking to capture the essence of what Sanchis Sinisterra calls a writing of "minor theatricality". Attending to the idea made explicit in the stage directions of the dramatic text, stating that it is a hospital room, white and aseptic, in the construction of the theatrical space we have limited ourselves to only a few props: an old bathtub, a hook tied with a rope of straw, an old chair similar to the ones used in the old psychiatric electric shock treatments, and a mulatto doll. All of this is spatially arranged on a rectangular white canvas covering the space occupied by the viewer all the way to the back wall, where the screen is located.

With a white, blinding light emanating from it, a imaginary curtain opens on three actresses (As Barbarian Multeatro), who represent the only character in the play, Ghita. Optimism, faith and hope in the truth inside the theater, a prison-shelter where the viewer is held captive by the duration of the work. Quick, without concession or emotional respite, everything happens in a flash, and between sequence and sequence, what has long been keeping Ghita quiet is rewritten: her essence as a human being and the white of absence and oblivion. In reality, Ghita is Mehdi, a being stunted by the system that has been living for thirty years in the skin of her dead sister.

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