

62. Latin America

Social, cultural, and historical aspects related to the appropriation of Shakespeare in Latin America have been addressed from diverse critical perspectives, as in anthologies edited by Jose Roberto O'Shea (1999), Aimara Resende (2002), and Bernice Kliman and Rick Santos (2005), among others, as well as in encyclopaedic articles – e. g. the entries by Alfredo Michel Modenessi and Margarida G. Rauen in Dobson and Wells (2001). Even though systematic research on discourse and its aims in works featuring Shakespearean *topoi* is scant both in the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and in Portuguese-speaking Brazil, such intertextuality is considerable in our fiction, essays, drama and performance. For instance, on account of the widespread transmission of the play, Romeo and Juliet have in effect achieved the status of impossible love metaphor throughout the region.

Like the rest of the modern, colonial and post-colonial (i. e. ›western‹) world, Latin America has also seen its share of appropriations of *Hamlet* as a purported ›figure of thought,‹ that is, as an emblem for a set of ideas, problems and questions. Such appropriations, however, have usually come in less absolute, far-reaching and outspoken ways and shapes than the 19th century formula ›Germany is Hamlet!‹ (→ Ch. 49) Instead, characters from *The Tempest* have become privileged sites for discussion of our historical and political identities, since the most significant Latin American appropriations of Shakespearean characters for similar goals have historically and understandably fluctuated between Ariel, in the first half of the 20th century, and Caliban, in more recent times and with greater impact. The specific use of Hamlet as a figure of thought in Latin America, then, is not so common, although we can verify it in major 19th and 20th century authors.

Spanish-Speaking Latin America

In June 2005, two years before his death, the Mexican stage director Juan José Gurrola (1935–2007) wrote an article concerning his recent translation and staging of *Hamlet* at the National University of Mexico – the last major project in his controversial career. Therein, amid a dozen unwarranted fictions regarding Shakespeare's times and artistic practices,

Gurrola thrashed prior versions of the play as inadequate to render it ›true‹ to the dramatist's designs or to the needs of a Mexican audience. There was nothing new in that: over 40 years of work, Gurrola made his name by boldly, relentlessly, and often brilliantly, appropriating the play at hand for artistic purposes that he never viewed as conforming with tradition, commonplace, or other people's thoughts. But his most telling opinion was that

while translating the play, I could hardly help cracking up, as the Prince of Denmark gradually unfolded before me in the shape of a great deceiver, a cunning prankster – above all, as an experienced comedian with a wonderful knack for stagecraft and a fabulous feel for his audience's responses. (Gurrola, 2005, n.p. [All translations from non-English sources are the authors'])

Thus, with his usual gargantuan flare, while identifying a clear but often ignored trait of Shakespeare's ubiquitous character, Gurrola also overelaborated Hamlet as identical with his own creative self, and hence his version and production of the play as definitive, at least in Gurrola's own province.

Gurrola's production was set in a world of dilapidated scaffolds, garish backdrops, rags, graffiti, waste bins, and grotesque actions, seeking to match what he considered Shakespeare's ›daring reflection on the causes of a diseased theatre and on what it could become if its stale axioms were questioned‹ (Gurrola 2005, n.p.). Whether or not his stage designs and concepts succeeded at that or another level, the ›great deceiver‹ and ›cunning prankster‹ that Gurrola thereby sought to frame didn't show quite the way nor at the point he desired. Instead, actor Daniel Giménez Cacho, though keen on the comedic aspects of the part, delivered a more nuanced Hamlet, evidently aware of the prescribed ending but not simply genial and cynical about it, at odds with Gurrola's overdone scenario. Like the outstanding Mexican director Martín Acosta before him, who in 1997 staged a decadent ›generation-X‹ *Hamlet* that fell helplessly flat, Gurrola couldn't avoid being yet another victim of Hamlet's *post-mortem* revenge on the world: his lasting ability to shun being grasped ›whole,‹ even when only partially defined and accordingly pursued.

In spite of the fact that *The Tempest* is the one play by Shakespeare ever to have generated full-fledged figures of thought at a regional level, in Spanish-speaking Latin America, as in all other parts of the world, *Hamlet* remains the most recurrent Shakespeare title among the handful that the general pub-

lic can presently identify, whether as a topical reference or an actual object of commentary, study or performance. That notwithstanding, cases where Hamlet may have signified a whole category of thought to a major Spanish-speaking Latin American intellectual, let alone a community, are few and hardly specific to the region. To wit, suffice it to mention the highly influential Cuban poet, essayist and political hero José Martí (1853–1895), who reportedly desisted to translate *Hamlet* (at age 13!) because he found the presence of mice and gravediggers in the play absurd and vile, and its writer, therefore, though remarkable, a paradigm of artistic impropriety – an opinion that he evidently shared with several European predecessors, and maybe even owed to them.

Thus, what can be clearly perceived from the history of *Hamlet* in Spanish-speaking Latin America is a sustained growth in appropriation by artists and thinkers from an ever-spreading variety of fields who have, unsurprisingly, sought to bring Hamlet to bear on their respective ideas, endeavours and eras, but seldom, if at all, establishing him as a term for common reference or definition. In other words, Hamlet has been used (often vacuously) more as a local analogy or a platform from which to launch and support individual or *ad-hoc* stands than as an overarching metaphor or signifier. A simple illustration may be provided by Martín Acosta's second *Hamlet*, staged in Colombia, Mexico and the USA in 2006–2007. In contrast with his flawed 1997 version, expressly set on a bare stage and deprived of other readily identifiable indices of time and place, Acosta's second try was publicized on the website of the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts of NYU as

[...] the first ever Mexican/Colombian production of *Hamlet*. New York audiences will be exposed to a distinctively Latin American *Hamlet*, which reveals new perspectives on this classic work that hint at Colombia's current political climate while staying true to Shakespeare's original story. This modern Spanish translation, set in the 1950's, is visual, visceral, and hard-hitting. It dispenses with archaic language and offers a sardonic humor that is distinctively Mexican. (<http://nyuskirball.org/calendar/hamlet>, 15.8.2010)

Although largely a ploy to attract the »New York audiences« by emphasizing »exotic« qualities in the production, this description nonetheless points out true features that were rather obviously designed to tap into the present and the historical awareness of its primary audiences. This is, of course, a frequent practice everywhere Shakespeare is performed and doesn't constitute a clean example of Hamlet as a

figure of thought. However, it shares a common procedure with cases where an attempt has been made to render Hamlet a blanketing term of identity or definition in Spanish-speaking Latin America, albeit mostly in individual or self-referential ways – as witnessed by Gurrola's assimilation of the part to his artistic personality, and the publication of his version, both intended to be considered »definitive« (at least locally), though ultimately far from transcendental, even in Mexico.

Thus, for all its predominance as Shakespeare's most coveted source of intellectual stimulation, in Spanish-speaking Latin America Hamlet hasn't really turned into a powerful emblem of a specifically national or regional set of ideas. Rather, this figure has been preferably used to establish links between Latin America and its European roots, to validate a sense of belonging in the western world. To understand why, we must consider that Shakespeare arrived in Spanish-speaking Latin America within a couple of decades after the appearance of the first direct Spanish translation of one of his plays – *Hamlet*, needless to say – in 1798, the year of *Lyrical Ballads*. Thus, Shakespeare emerged in Spanish in the early 19th century, already a figure of high repute in a print-oriented and early Romantic culture inside a decaying empire. Twelve years later, the future nations of Latin America began to fight for independence, led by migrated Europeans or natives of European descent under the influence of liberal and democratic ideals from revolutionary France and the early USA. Paradoxically, the move to independence also purported to preserve the original »mission« of colonization, as the »New World« was supposed to complete the civilizatory project that the decadent powers had failed to accomplish. In lieu of this, however, throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, most Latin American nations have fluctuated violently between attempts at consolidating democratic or socialist regimes and the callous truths of imperial, dictatorial or un-democratic governments.

In their relatively short independent existence, the Spanish-speaking cultures of Latin America have produced a considerable number of appropriations of *Hamlet*, from a variety of angles. For the most part, however, these appropriations have artistically and intellectually leaned to the West, as the case of Martí's early quarrel with Shakespeare's vulgarity makes clear. Many have been as trivial as may be reasonably expected, of course. For example, it is possible to stumble upon papers that make reference to

Hamlet in their titles and yet contain hardly a word relating to either the play, its protagonist or even its Ghost – as in a case study on labour in Argentina whose Spanish heading roughly translates as »Hamlet's Ghost in the *pampas*: *chacareros* and rural labourers, the unseen classes« (Ansaldi 1995). Still, such examples betoken an interest in making their points more resonant by virtue of a prestigious, though ready-made, ›universal‹ allusion.

Many other instances come in a much less casual guise, of course, and are certainly more complex. Since the history of *Hamlet* on the Spanish-speaking Latin American stages largely pre-dates and outnumbers his presence in academic or other writing and media, the vast majority of appropriations proceed from inside and around the theatre. The instances not strictly connected with the stage, however, also offer enough, and sufficiently telling, material to attempt a brief but illustrative sampler of relevant cases from both areas. For reasons of space and clarity, examples will be restricted to Mexico and Argentina.

Apart from the considerable amount of Shakespeare's plays that are produced every year in straightforward manner on the Mexican stages, in Mexico Shakespeare has also been the basis for a large number of adaptations and appropriations, among which *Hamlet* has been the chief source. To illustrate achievements in derivative writing, suffice it to mention the outstanding plays *Hamlet, por ejemplo* (»Hamlet, for instance«; 1983) by Héctor Mendoza, and *Los insensatos* (roughly »The senseless«; 2010) by David Olguín. As regards the stage, having already and summarily dealt with a couple of cases from the contemporary Mexican theatre, it may be profitable to follow by asking two questions on the basis of another two versions of *Hamlet* also made and staged in Mexico: one towards the end of the 19th century and the other near the end of the 20th.

A Mexican adaptation of *Hamlet* made by Manuel Pérez Bibbins and Francisco López Carvajal, performed and published in 1886, has been thoroughly documented and evaluated by the Spanish scholar Jesús Tronch-Pérez as ultimately delivering the »telling image [...] of a perplexed inactive revenger« (Tronch-Pérez 2005, 67), an »unavenging prince« who fails to kill Claudius and never wounds Laertes. For Tronch-Pérez, this *Hamlet* is characterized as »a sympathetic figure, unjustly killed, and perplexed by circumstances« (Tronch-Pérez 2005, 61) but also as a »more doubting, unstable, and weakened hero«

(Tronch-Pérez 2005, 66) than Shakespeare's character. Aptly identifying that the dramaturgs subscribe and reinforce a Romantic vision of *Hamlet*, Tronch-Pérez concludes that the adaptors' success in dignifying the prince comes at the cost of presenting a hero who falls short of his task.

In another section of his evaluation, however, Tronch-Pérez spots what may be an equally significant aspect of this 1886 Mexican *Hamlet*: the fact that he is shown, pointedly due to the dramaturgs' work, as utterly ignoring »what is going on [...] He is not in control of his own course of life« (Tronch-Pérez 2005, 67). Everything in this Mexican *Hamlet* suggests that Pérez Bibbins and López Carvajal took pains to move from a relatively effective abridgement of Shakespeare's plot unto a clean diversion from it, in order to stress the unawareness of the character regarding his own context and need to take control of his life. For although both dramaturgs may have shared much in their ›melancholy-bred‹ characterization of *Hamlet* – both were active in the late-Romantic poetic scene of Mexico – at least one of them was far from ignoring the urgent circumstances of the country under the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, and likewise far from remaining politically inactive. Among other things, Manuel Pérez Bibbins was the co-founder, in 1885, of *El Hijo del Ahuizote*, a journal that relentlessly opposed Díaz's rule for two decades prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Was his *Hamlet* at any point, even marginally, intended to epitomize the conditions of a land and a population caught in its own perplexity and in need of awareness?

Almost one hundred years later, Juan Carlos Arvide, a director who migrated from Mexico City to the state of Michoacán, in western Mexico, came up with the idea of staging a classic play in the native language and with the native people from that region, the *P'urhepecha*. Arvide eventually chose to do *Hamlet* because its plot closely resembled a native chronicle from pre-Columbian times that featured the usurpation of a king's throne and queen by his treacherous brother, who was finally killed by his nephew, the rightful heir to the kingdom. In the end, *Hamlet*, translated and adapted from a Spanish text into the *P'urhepecha* language and historical context by Lucas Gómez and Gilberto Jerónimo, became a fascinating combination of Shakespeare's play with a narrative of self-destruction stemming from native oral tradition. The history and possible implications of this project, staged in 1990 and published in 1992,

have been described elsewhere (cf. Modenessi 2001), but it may be relevant to reiterate a two-fold question. Given that the *P'urhepecha*, like the *Mexica* (otherwise known as the ›Aztecs‹) before them, were ultimately defeated by the Spaniards mostly due to their internecine conflicts, and that their lands, women and identities were subsequently forcibly taken from them, did this *Hamlet P'urhepecha* serve as a figure of thought to its native spectators, as an emblem of their past and present plights?

The history of *Hamlet* on the Argentine stages also provides ample testimony that politically charged productions of Shakespeare have never been wanting in Spanish-speaking Latin America, especially under and after the dire times of military rule. *Hamlet* is not only, and by far, the favorite Shakespeare play in Argentina, but almost a defining fixture in the life of its theatre. In 1821 the legendary actor, entrepreneur and active patriot Luis Ambrosio Morante (1775–1837) played one of the gravediggers in an adaptation entitled *El imperio de la verdad* (›The Empire of Truth‹); a little later, he would both write another adaptation of *Hamlet* and perform the lead. Being the main port of entry to South America, Buenos Aires saw a great deal of theatre from Europe in the 19th century, including several *Hamlets* from Italy (→ Ch. 52), such as a cross-dressed production with Giacinta Pezzana in the title role in 1898 (Howard 2007, 110) (→ Ch. 27), as well as versions featuring Tomasso Salvini and Ernesto Rossi in 1870 (cf. Pelletieri 2003, 438). The countless occasions that *Hamlet* has been staged in Argentina since the beginning of the 20th century, include everything from straight and massive stagings to opera and American adaptations. Significantly, in 1980, even after the worst years of military rule, and still under it, the company Teatro San Martín presented a memorable *Hamlet*, translated and adapted by Luis Gregorich, and directed by Omar Grasso, that conveyed to the Argentine public much of the recent, present, and local tragedy in the guise of ›the universal‹ drama.

Since the demise of the military regimes, *Hamlet* has consistently served as a repository and vehicle for Argentina's present and historical memory. In 1991, for instance, Ricardo Bartís staged a satirical show inspired by *Hamlet*, called *La guerra de los teatros* (›The War of the Theatres‹), that implicitly commented on the corrupt bureaucracy of the Menem regime by portraying the political scene as a troupe that was stealing ›the show of lies‹ from a

company of legitimate comedians. The most powerful and influential production in the late 20th century, however, was a 1995 version of Heiner Müller's *Hamletmaschine* (→ Ch. 71) with the title *Máquina Hamlet* by the collective El Periférico de Objetos. (→ Ch. 45) In the aftermath of dictatorship, and in the midst of the demagoguery of the Menem regime, the Argentine audiences and critics witnessed a show fearlessly foregrounding the entire catalogue of horrors of the second half of the 20th century – from the Holocaust to the first Gulf War – through an imaginative remake of the already intense German adaptation of Shakespeare's drama, with an emphasis on Argentina's own harrowing experience of state terrorism.

This historic show would later resurface at the core of the 2009 documentary video-film *No reconciliados* (›Not reconciled‹) by the Spanish artist Marcelo Expósito, which apart from remembering, re-evaluating and re-vitalizing what the 1995 *Máquina Hamlet* managed to signify, betokens a highly interesting and powerful trend in contemporary Argentine appropriations of *Hamlet*. *No reconciliados* not only documents and comments on the outstanding 1995 theatre event, but establishes a strong link between it – and thereby also between *Hamlet* – and the current conditions of many young adults in Argentina, who were the children of the darkest times in that country and have now grown to explore and confront both their parents' past and the pressing debates over justice and revenge in their own present – so much that some, including Expósito, think of the youth of Argentina as a ›Hamlet generation,‹ fated to account for the crimes and faults of its elders.

In 2004, for instance, Emilio García staged a version of *Hamlet* written by Luis Cano, which demonstrated that possibly the best starting point for a production of the play in the present is an understanding that its conflict derives from the mandate of a father for revenge – a notion that in the Argentine context after military rule automatically inflects the so-called universal sense of Shakespeare's play with unmistakably local overtones. According to Cano's reading, then, *Hamlet* is no Romantic or Marxist hero, but a part of the capital and the machinery of power, therefore helplessly impelled to struggle either for or against them, but hence likewise helplessly against himself, a conflict with which many minds in Argentina are presently not only acquainted but grappling. Similarly, in 2009 Juan

Diego Botto – a Spanish actor and director born in Argentina to a father who ›disappeared‹ and a mother who consequently sought refuge for her and her young children in Spain – staged and acted in a *Hamlet* that revolved around issues such as the delay of much needed and deserved justice, and the impact of being fatherless, evidently gesturing towards the victims of state terrorism both in Argentina and Spain. The great body of theatrical production and derivatives from and around *Hamlet*, in and around Argentina, may be the closest that Shakespeare's play and character have come to constituting a figure of thought in Spanish-speaking Latin America.

The conflict generated by the disruption or absence of the crucial relationship between father and son is particularly significant to the Argentine mind not only because of its political implications but also because, among the Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America, Argentina is the leader in the study and practice of psychology, and hence its culture is the most inflected by it, especially by all Freudian and post-Freudian modes of psychoanalysis, both professionally and in broader intellectual terms. *Hamlet* being historically the chief subject of study in the Shakespeare canon (→ Ch. 19), the academic and essayistic work on Shakespeare's play in Argentina is frequently underscored by psychoanalytic considerations.

A case in point is a study published by Enrique Kozicki (2004) with a title that roughly translates as *Hamlet, the father and the law*. This book combines reflections on the theatrical aspects of legal procedures, institutions and practices with a psychoanalytic perspective on the relationship between *Hamlet* and his father's ghost as depending on a structure of power stemming precisely from the province of the law and its rituals. Similar cases approaching *Hamlet* from predominantly socio-political and psychological perspectives may be easily found in traditional and on-line forms, as evidenced by the book *Política y tragedia. Hamlet, entre Hobbes y Maquiavelo* (›Politics and Tragedy. *Hamlet*, between Hobbes and Machiavelli‹) by Eduardo Rinesi (2005); or an on-line paper by Laura Inés Etcharren (2006), whose title may be rendered as ›*Hamlet: The Struggle of the Self and the Power of Passion*,‹ which relies more heavily on psychoanalytic principles. Again, the academic and essayistic production on *Hamlet* in Argentina is usually un-scholarly and compliant with – as well as constricted by – conventional views or standards.

In spite of his popularity on stage, in Mexico most writing on Shakespeare has also been un-scholarly, conventional and scant – and where it is shockingly abundant (namely, the 40 plus books so far self-financed and published by Martín Casillas in scarcely a decade and a half), it is also unfortunately a hodge-podge of rough and patchwork information, dubious speculations and poorly rendered transcriptions or unacknowledged borrowings from all kinds of both distant and recent Shakespeare studies. Still, three separate cases dealing more honestly and specifically with *Hamlet* provide grounds for a final note.

The book *Shakespeare, abismo iluminado* (›Shakespeare, chasm enlightened‹; 1943) by Mateo Solana y Gutiérrez, is not far from the author-centered and character-centered writing that dominated Shakespeare Studies before the late 20th century, though somewhat less formally rigorous and far more rhapsodic. Throughout its nearly five hundred pages, Solana proves to be aptly conversant with Shakespeare's works and with many of his commentators, as well as with a long list of other writers, artists, historians and scientists whom he brings to bear on his considerations: Mozart, Shaw, Taine, Otto Rank, D'Annunzio, Byron, Goethe and so forth, with Freud hovering above all. At the present stage of Shakespeare Studies, however, Solana's points ring simple, even hollow, and amusingly bardolatrous. And yet, when it comes to dealing extensively with *Hamlet*, for all his overwhelmingly stiff Freudian take on it, some of Solana's notes look fresh, as when he says that ›Shakespeare's creation proves true the unique possibility of achieving an overpowering tragic effect while concealing the character of the protagonist in the dark‹ (Solana 1943, 256), a point that in the middle of a book everywhere relying on almost clinical erudition, is interestingly un-dogmatic – in fact, refreshingly obscure: ›un-glowing,‹ so to speak, in the ›light‹ of the title.

If in Solana's book the obscurity of *Hamlet* appears only unexpectedly, the first truly academic monograph on the play by a Mexican scholar makes one of its darker aspects almost obsessive. In 1962, Margarita Quijano, a professor of the National University, published the book *Hamlet y sus críticos* (*Hamlet and Its Critics*), a relatively short but rigorous close-reading of the play, as well as a critical survey of the leading scholarly views at the time. Beyond her academic and assertive style, what attracts attention in Quijano's discussion is a recurrent monotone deploring the rottenness of *Hamlet*'s

world to such an extent that she finally seems incapable of drawing interpretive conclusions from any other angle: »Horatio and Ophelia's innate good stands in sharp contrast with the rottenness of the world around them« (Quijano 1962, 79); »The rottenness from a criminal action corrodes the very foundation of society« (Quijano 1962, 179) »The theme of the play is the uneven fight between Hamlet and the corruption to which everyone, even himself, falls prey« (Quijano 1962, 182) – and so forth. Quijano's monotone makes one wonder, to paraphrase Solana, whether »the character of the protagonist [can all but remain] in the dark.«

The third example is an essay entitled »El rey duerme. Crónica hacia *Hamlet*« (»The King Sleeps. A Chronicle towards *Hamlet*«) by Juan Villoro, an outstanding Mexican novelist and essayist. It is the first piece in a book originally published in 2007, called *De eso se trata* (roughly »That's what it's all about«, or »That's the point«), a phrase hard to translate into English simply because it itself is the translation offered by the Spanish poet Tomás Segovia (1927–2011) in his 2002 version of the play for Hamlet's »that is the question,« the best-known supplement to his »To be or not to be« as found in the Q₂ and F texts of the play (III.1.56). Segovia's rendering, in turn, is unorthodox, quite unlike any previous version in Spanish, and curiously closer to the alternative supplement to »To be or not to be« in the Q₁ text: »aye, there's the point.« Segovia's phrase is also an object of great admiration to Villoro, who calls it »a revelation« (Villoro 2008, 21), perhaps because it succeeds in rendering a text that both intimates and denies the possibility of ever establishing what or where the point is.

The essay is a labyrinthine mix of narrative bits and reflections about a number of seemingly random events that include, in no linear order: Villoro's long search for a copy of Segovia's *Hamlet*, and his pleasure in actually obtaining and enjoying it after having imagined doing so; his sojourn as a guest teacher at Yale in 1994, where he arrived just as the Zapatista uprising began and Mexico started moving for better, and for worse, into the 21st century; his experience attending the lectures that eventually became Harold Bloom's *The Invention of the Human* (1998) while slowly recovering from a stupidly broken leg; the extensive notes that he took there, in a notebook that a student gave him prior to his departure to New Haven and which he only recovered and fully read thirteen years later, before writing this es-

say; and a series of reflections on *Hamlet* flowing freely through Villoro's fragmented memories and firm knowledge of texts by Gramsci, Mann, Auden, Fisher, and finally Borges' fictions involving Shakespeare. In the end, after a brief description of how, now before returning to Mexico, another student gave him yet another notebook, the very one where this essay was finally written, Villoro's »Chronicle towards *Hamlet*« becomes a testimony of how the artist's journey is, like Shakespeare's, like Hamlet's, »an attempt to overcome his perplexity before what he didn't know how to interpret on time« (Villoro 2008, 30).

In the light of Villoro's sharp remark – and in somewhat »Borgian« fashion – the fact that Hamlet seems all but impregnable to the former two Mexican writers in spite of their efforts to circumscribe it within apparently well-structured frames of thought, paradoxically renders this third and last example fully clear in its convoluted refusal to grasp Hamlet any way other than as a totally evasive proposition.

Brazil

As in most countries of Latin America, the presence of Shakespeare – and of Hamlet – in Brazil dates back to the colonial period and the mediation of theatre companies from Portugal that performed mostly in Rio de Janeiro after the late 1700's. Literary use only became intense in the 19th century. Ellen Douglass (1998), for example, has discussed the use of quotations from *Hamlet* in Machado de Assis' 1884 short story »A cartomante« (»The fortune teller«). The earlier work of Eugenio Gomes (1961) was seminal regarding reflections upon Shakespeare's extensive influence in the work of renowned Brazilian authors such as Gonçalves Dias, Álvares de Azevedo, Alberto de Oliveira, Luis Delfino, Olavo Bilac, Cruz e Sousa, Coelho Neto, Machado de Assis and Rui Barbosa. More specifically, drawing on Hazlitt and on Furness' famous saying that »Germany is not Hamlet,« in his influential book Gomes devotes the bulk of a whole chapter on *dramatis personae* to Hamlet, arguing that »Hamlet is inevitably condemned to receive the color of the country or the spirit who seeks to understand it [...] Hamlet is each one of us« (Gomes 1961, 205). As he restates his defense of relocation, Gomes points out Shakespeare's connection with Giordano Bruno and quotes from Hamlet: »there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it

so« (II.2.246 f.). In effect, thinking and acting *Hamlet* in Brazil have been strongly shaped by circumstances of reception and transmission.

In her comparative study of translations into Brazilian Portuguese, Marcia Martins (2004) aptly reviews textual transmission, which in many cases evinces the use of source texts that had been previously translated in Portugal drawing on French versions by Jean-François Ducis (→ Ch. 50) and Alfred de Vigny. Moreover, Portuguese and Brazilian translators tended to omit the textual history and sources of *Hamlet*, constructing it as a Shakespearean creation. Nevertheless, at least one Portuguese version by Domingo Ramos (1928) was available in Brazil in the 1920s, offering information on Saxo-Grammaticus' history of Denmark (→ Ch. 1), in addition to mentioning the quartos and the Folio. According to Martins, Tristão da Cunha was the first translator of *Hamlet* (1933) and of a Shakespearean play from a source in English in Brazil. Since the 1960's, Barbara Heliodora is renowned for her extensive work on the Shakespearean canon, and for her translations thereof. Also, new translations and adaptations into the Brazilian kind of the Portuguese language, and into specifically Brazilian contexts, have increasingly emerged with the turn of the century. On the other hand, among all Latin American countries, Brazil is the culture with the greatest tradition and participation in academic studies and affairs relating to Shakespeare throughout the world.

Despite this context, the complexity of Hamlet's philosophical and ethical implications has not been broadly articulated in Brazil. The figure of Hamlet often occurs as a metaphor in new plays, fiction, poetry and films that develop the themes of madness, revenge and/or usurpation, such as Ozualdo Candéias' 1970 film *A Herança* (roughly, »The Heritage«) and Antonio Abujamra's 1991 play *Um Certo Hamlet* (»A Certain Hamlet«). On the other hand, the issues of politics and succession have frequently been updated in theatre productions in association with newspaper headlines about violence in power disputes, enhancing the commonsense notion of Hamlet as a timeless and universal condition. The productions of *Hamlet* by directors Ulysses Cruz (1997) and Aderbal Freire Filho (2008) illustrate this trend in the last decades. Tropes aside, however, the strict use of Hamlet as a figure of thought in works of fiction must be considered rare.

In terms of usage that directly intervenes in the organization of discourse and clearly denotes *inven-*

tio, Augusto Boal and Denise Stoklos stand out for appropriating Hamlet in the cultural and situational context of Brazil's political history.

A highly influential theatre artist and master emerging from the conflicted mid-20th century, Boal acknowledges Hamlet in various statements regarding his method – known as »Theatre of the Oppressed« – so as to expand on his aims of empowering »espectadores« (roughly, »spect-actors«), unlike directors who merely use Shakespeare as a pretext. First published in Buenos Aires in the 1970's, his book on the method – likewise called *Theatre of the Oppressed* – has been translated into several languages and even become the main textbook of theatre arts programs worldwide. Boal also made Hamlet a central figure in his autobiography – whose title translates as *Hamlet and the Baker's Son* – claiming that *Hamlet* was his beloved text, the only one he could think of when starting the 1960's Arena Theatre Project in São Paulo: »Hamlet breathes, has lungs. Hamlet is outdoors, open skies« (Boal, 2000, 139).

On the other hand, Denise Stoklos articulates Hamlet as a figure of oppression in her play *Hamleto* (1982), and in later works regarding structures of power and domination. Her monologue *500 years – a fax from Denise Stoklos to Christopher Columbus* was originally written and published in English and first staged in Germany in 1992. It was also produced in Denmark, Argentina and Brasil. With it, she meant »to write a play about Latin America from the point of view of the colonized people. The inherited structure of exploitation and disrespect that continues indefinitely« (Stoklos 1992, 67), as the following passage suggests:

[...] we, Latin Americans and Brazilians [...] have always appeared to be eternal Hamlets. The Hamlet who was robbed, betrayed, threatened, abused, disregarded, harassed, and above all, as eternal Hamlets, we know who the killers of our fathers were [...] But ultimately, as in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, we are unable to engage in the action of recovering our original rights (Stoklos 1992, 7).

Stoklos believes that everyone who stands as a subaltern of the dictatorships of mass media and world capitalism is a Hamlet. She is particularly concerned with the history of colonization, and in her book *The Essential Theatre* (1993) she presents counter-discursive objectives that emphasize the possibility of upsetting obsolete hierarchies and empowering her audiences through her work.

Thus, the ever-changing presence of Shakespeare's »universal« character in the Latin American

scenes suggests that, whether in our numerous varieties of Spanish, or in Brazilian Portuguese, whatever Hamlet has already signified, or may eventually signify, as a figure of thought in Latin America must be sought and found at the meeting point of our needs, our desires, and our readiness to appropriate it – even when we cannot quite tell if, indeed, »there’s the point.«

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