CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE THEATRE
EXPERIMENTALISM, POLITICS AND UTOPIA
[WORKING TITLE]
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CONTEMPORARY PORTUGUESE THEATRE

EXPERIMENTALISM, POLITICS AND UTOPIA

[WORKING TITLE]

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The Poetics of Disquiet in *mala voadora*, Colectivo 84, Martim Pedroso & Nova Companhia and Miguel Loureiro (Coletivo 3/quartos)
Mala voadora, Colectivo 84, Martim Pedroso & Nova Companhia, and Miguel Loureiro’s 3/quartos collective are all characterised by their constant reinvention of the artistic methods they employ. Neither are maps used to define their routes nor formulas composed to ensure success, the companies instead preferring to allow disquiet to plot out new landscapes around them. All that these collectives share is their concern to create an autonomous location, a space for the reinvention of methods with which to receive and restore the freedom to invent new futures, thereby undermining the apathy in which contemporary social, political and spiritual malaise is cloaked. In seeking out the traces of creative construction processes, we acknowledge poetics’ inherently dialogical nature, which, in the words of Laurence Louppe, invites the analytical subject to “travel incessantly between discourse and practice, feeling and making, perception and realization” (Louppe, 2012: 30). We thus reveal the “making”, the tools and methods of composition whose deliberate mutability invites sustained questioning, offering fresh forms and figures for time’s disquiet. Our time’s disquiet. Which is also our own disquiet.

That’s life, that’s life, that’s life
[Martim Pedroso]

Martim Pedroso & Nova Companhia is one of the most recent collectives on the Portuguese theatre circuit. It began in 2012 with the debut of O Grande Salão [The Great Salon] — by Martim Pedroso and Nelson Guerreiro, 2012 —, a performance which gathers hundreds of Facebook comments in a highly political parody. Songs, laments, mockeries and clichés are “posted”, creating seemingly light-hearted fun which ends up condemning the acute social injustice suffered in Portugal as a result of the economic crisis. Founded in 2013, the company developed its activity amongst a group of artistic allies — Flávia Gusmão, João Telmo and Statt Miller are just some of the compagnons de route of the actor and director, Martim Pedroso, who is driven by an enthusiasm for novelty, something he compares to the sensations involved in the enchantment experienced during the first moments of a romantic relationship. That passionate spark, which prompts surprise, tumult and surrender, is visible in Filhos das Mães [Their Mothers’ Sons] — São Luiz Municipal Theatre, February 2017). Right at the start of the play, mothers and children spread out across the stage. The mothers — attentive to their children’s needs, and also to the audience entering the Mário Viegas auditorium — are: Flávia Gusmão, Joana Seixas, Katrin Kaasa, Rita Calçada Bastos and Vera Kolodzig. As the play’s co-writers and actresses, the women speak of their recent experiences of motherhood, which is also a return to their own childhoods, an inexplicable feeling of love, the discovery of new fears, living with one’s heart on one’s sleeve. The autobiographical nature of the piece is acknowledged when the actresses introduce themselves to the audience. Flávia Gusmão, breastfeeding her daughter, explains their first project, from 2014, when all the women were pregnant and, in a state of grace, they debuted Consegues Ver os Teus Pés? [Can You See Your Feet?] at the Teatro Taborda.
(Catarina Guerreiro, Statt Miller, Bruno Huca,
Paulo Duarte Ribeiro and Iris Cayatte) | photo Alípio Padilha
Photographs of that period of expectant joy appear on a screen and are nostalgically discussed by the actresses. But, as Flávia Gusmão announces, “it’s much easier being pregnant than being a mother, for fuck’s sake!”, and with this, the tragic, provocative and irreverent heart of Filhos das Mães is declared. Making direct eye contact, the actresses throw out questions like punches: “Do you wish you could have two lives — one for being a mum, and another for all the rest?”; fears and obsessions are voiced repeatedly — the fear of being a bad example, a bad mother, of failure —, and other tragedies and other mothers (Medea, Hecuba, Nora, Jocasta) are revived. Without falling into a confessional tone, or complacency, the actresses’ pulsating performances reveal the internal wounds, the scars — both literal and metaphorical — as well as the difficulties involved as this experience passes from the private to the public arena.

In conversation with the audience on the 12th February 2017, the creative team acknowledged that the whole process had itself been a difficult birth — something which is perhaps not surprising, given that it was a collaborative creation combining different personalities and experiences, ethical choices and aesthetic options. On that occasion, the debate grappled with the experience of motherhood — how it changes one’s body, rhythms, one’s daily existence, and how it simultaneously evokes the memory of one’s own parents, transforming one’s perspective on memory. Autobiographical material was carved and filtered in structured improvisations which used techniques and exercises that the actresses had themselves suggested.
The text was set, cut and expanded, personal experiences mixing with those of figures taken from dramatic literature. Construction of an “intermediary character” was one technique adopted here — a method in which the actresses play themselves, representing a hyperbolised self, or a dramatic “I”, which retains the unique characteristics of the individual. This game of identification and simultaneous non-recognition immerses the audience in the performance’s textural diversity, as distancing self-irony is played off against a closer emotional recognition, with such shifts reflecting the playful relationship between the actor-characters and the literary characters.

The autobiographical and documentary nature of Martim Pedroso’s theatre can also be seen in other recent productions. The text for *As Três (Velhas) Irmãs* [*The Three (Old) Sisters*], from 2015, is based on two months’ worth of meetings with the actresses Graça Lobo, Mariema and Paula Só, whose lives are subtly interwoven with the yearnings of Olga, Masha and Irina — Anton Chekhov’s creations. The nostalgic heart of the play, which talks of dashed hopes and the deferment of happiness, touches on the collection of memories that the actresses have recorded on a board displaying old photos — images containing the ephemeral and loss. Memory, defined by the director as that which “once was and no longer is”, plays with a future loaded with events that will never come to be. “That’s life, that’s life, that’s life”, repeats Graça Lobo, addressing the audience directly. Next to her, Beckett’s ghost can almost be seen.

The rejection of indifference and of ideas of theatre as a commercial product is an ethical imperative for the Colectivo 84, jointly directed, since 2008, by the actor John Romão and playwright Mickaël de Oliveira. The aggression of a capitalist world, the marketisation of everything and everyone, corrosive corruption, which spreads from the very top of political and financial institutions right down to smaller power relations — all this works its way onto their stage and tears through the bodies there. “Whatever is excluded from the stage”, says John Romão, “is what appears on ours”. The rawness and shamelessness of his staging, inherited from the Hispano-Argentine director Rodrigo García, are tools which capture the audience, wrapping them, sensorially and intellectually, in painful perplexities — in the shadow of ethical questions which are at once intimate and political. “Violence has come to embed itself in our very breathing”, says John Romão. But these problems are not resolved in the secure setting of fiction; they are rather absorbed by the movements of the actors and presented back to the audience, providing neither answers nor explanations. Reality’s brutal nature breaks through Colectivo 84’s productions — it can be felt in the alternately celebratory, sacrificial, convulsing, intense bodies on stage.

The starting point is always the bodies of the actors, which the audience might recognise and identify with their own physical state; actions are simple — jumping, running, falling (Vicente & Romão, 2011). They might be actors or non-actors, but the professionals — those
who are assertive and technically accurate — are less interesting for John Romão. In successive performances by Romão, appearances are made by: children (Hipólito, Monólogo Masculino Sobre a Perplexidade [Hippolytus, Male Monologue on Perplexity] — written by Mickaël de Oliveira in 2008; and Agamémnon — Vim do Supermercado e Dei Porrada ao Meu Filho [Agamemnon — I Got Back From the Supermarket and Gave My Son a Beating] — written by Rodrigo García in 2011), three Brazilian prostitutes (Velocidade Máxima [Top Speed] — written by Mickaël de Oliveira in 2009), and twelve skaters (Teorema [Theorem] — written by Tiago Rodrigues and John Romão, based on a film by Pier Paolo Pasolini). The collective has just one rule: “not to tread a path which has already been trodden”. The experience of novelty and mystery is a must for its rehearsals, which provide “that panic, that emptiness which comes from not knowing which direction to move in” (Vicente & Romão, 2011). If discomfort can open up exploratory routes, the final result is always the responsibility of the actors: “I’m always open to suggestions, but it’s the actors who decide what they’ll do, where their limits lie” (Vicente & Romão, 2011).

Preparation for Horror ou Breve Estudo Sobre a Paralisia [Horror or a Brief Study of Paralysis] was based on the association of “horror” — a sensation which provokes a physical animal reaction — with the energy of youthful bodies. Starting with the idea of bringing together a revolution of vibrant bodies on the D. Maria II National Theatre’s small studio stage, the collective held auditions for which no previous experience was required. John Romão had in mind nothing
more than Ryan McGinley photographs, in which adolescents’ happy nudity blends with nature. The director’s study of eroticism prompted him to visit porn sites, arriving at one “which combined porn images and videos (as we think we know them) with images and videos of people who had been decapitated or gutted, bloody corpses which were the victims of car accidents. What shocked me most were the comments (of enjoyment) by anonymous figures who visited that place (of pleasure)” (Romão, 2011). While Romão worked on the physical action with Bernardo Rocha, João Folgado, Mariana Tengner Barros and Miguel da Cunha, the playwright attended rehearsals and wrote texts, rejecting the museological obsession of a fossilised staging tradition. “In the end”, comments Mickaël de Oliveira, “classic authors such as Shakespeare and Molière, wrote for the stage, for their time, and for the actors they knew”.

Although the collective didn’t adopt a rigid methodology, it was common for Mickaël to be present — physical proximity to the faces, muscles and voices of the actors being essential to him. His writing soaked up the energy of the images and the vibrations of the actors’ bodies, but this didn’t mean a literal translation of the scenic, physical and visual materials involved. Bodies, as a collection of signs, gave rise to the creation of a whole new universe of signs, with crossovers between the stage and writing being intuitive: a single word might trigger an action and elements from the stage might activate a visual process; during the rehearsals for Horror, Mariana and the water on the floor summoned the image of a beach, or, for example, the outfits (sweaters with animal ears) brought to mind the purity of a forest, a return to nature, where the young (characters/actors) take refuge:

I suggested the sounds of the animals we most like. I do an impression of an animal and I ask you, just for us to experiment with, to give yourself over to one, without choosing, so that it is made quite clear that before we were the shit that we are now, we had already been an animal. You were a cat of some sort, a panther or something like that […]. (Oliveira, 2011a)

The parallel processes converge at a tipping point, explains Mickaël, and it is here that dramaturgical bridges appear, establishing peripheral links between the stage and the text via the distance — or else the friction — between the words and images. For six weeks, the actors explored a tense and strenuous physicality, driven by the various different prompts that each day, Romão brought — drawings, actions, images. During rehearsals with choreographer Elena Córdoba, the director directed, photographed and filmed, taking home these records, from which new material for the next day’s rehearsals would emerge. Water and flowers were the principal materials around which they worked, and “that is a terrible combination, because a stage filled with water and flowers smells like a cemetery, it smells like death” (Vicente & Romão, 2011). Physical tension, sought in the body’s experience of gravity, via exercises testing one’s balance/imbalance, became associated with shouts, grimaces
Horror ou Breve Estudo Sobre a Paralisia, by Mickaël de Oliveira
dir. John Romão | Colectivo 84, 2014
(Miguel Cunha and Bernardo Rocha) | photo Susana Paiva
and the actors’ natural impulses, prompting a bold physicality which collapsed the apparent antagonisms of utopia/cruelty, pleasure/exercise of power. Desire and violence, or the desire of violence, mark Mickaël de Oliveira’s text, which is built up around the breath of the actors who announced on stage:

The mere fact of not feeling good — because this wasn’t the life we’d planned for ourselves — that gives us the right to insurrection. We have the right to destroy schools, to shoot students, with no regard for age, and to enter hospitals and do the same — they’re all customers of a certain system. (Oliveira, 2011a)

The performance, says the playwright in his presentation text for it, talks about a “sort of perverse hope; that’s to say, a utopia — because to go back to an animal state is to want to go back to a certain state of purity, which we might call naivety” (Oliveira, 2011b). Rui Monteiro saw a “praiseworthy act of cultural guerrilla warfare” on stage, in which the actors “struggle, like excessively carnal spirits, amongst themselves and with themselves. They exploit themselves, they violate themselves and are violated, they humiliate themselves and are shamed; they are subjected to scrutiny when they put themselves to the test, when they seek a different answer, questioning accepted assertions — principals which, out of habit, are never called into question” (Monteiro, 2011). For Colectivo 84, not being afraid to speak, not being afraid to act, is the essential requirement of a theatre attentive to the social and political circumstances of its time, committed, here and now, to revolt.

**It is a political act to maintain the category of “theatre” unstable**

Having worked together since 2003, the actor Jorge Andrade and the set designer José Capela are the artistic directors of mala voadora, a theatre company based upon the idea of a deliberate and conscious rejection of fixed composition methodologies and staging approaches. In the words of the duo’s actor, “we wanted to spar”. In the beginning, unstable processes were sought and directors whose methods of appropriating and staging a text varied from one figure to the next were invited to collaborate: Rogério de Carvalho, João Mota and Miguel Loureiro. However, it was Jorge Andrade’s experience with the English company Third Angel, in 2004, that provided the decisive moment in bursting opening the triangular staging model in which: the director directs the actors, who are moved around to interpret a text, which had originally been written by an author. Contact with “devised theatre”, which had been developed by Alexander Kelly and Rachael Walton from 1995 onwards, allowed mala voadora to reconfigure theatre as a space open to both a reinvention of methods and to a diverse range of expressive resources. From that point on, Andrade and Capela held to a single driving line: each performance must be the “proposal between a certain ‘subject’ and the formal speculation concerning what ‘theatre’ can be” (mala voadora, 2017). Initial inspiration might arise...
from everyday objects, events, gestures or concepts. As a privileged space for the construction of fiction, theatre offers instruments which are ideal for the analysis of “the banality of our times”, with dramatic mechanisms serving as the scalpels with which to dissect the collective imaginary. The company’s introductory text reads: “A mala voadora is the title of an (not particularly joyous) Andersen short story whose main protagonist ends up doomed to tell stories for a living” (mala voadora, 2017). The stories to which we are doomed, from historical narratives to fictional ones, are explored in their form — in the act of “telling” — with ideological discourses cropping up in narrative material ranging from great melodramas to the smallest of objects, such as a postage stamp.

Using stories collected from the oral tradition of Portugal’s Guimarães region, collected by Francisco Martins Sarmento, Chris Thorpe wrote Dead End (dir. Jorge Andrade, 2012). It is a criss-crossing of plots and characters analysed in their relation to melodrama — the genre which continues to quench audiences’ thirst for happy endings, punishment and reward. Nineteen actors appear in five simultaneous scenarios, the realism of which is combined with the television studio décor. However, the codes of the physical setting are transgressed from the start, as actors circulate freely on the stage. An entrepreneur (Jorge Andrade), sitting at a meeting table with a group of seven Chinese businessmen, lists the conditions necessary to make fiction possible, explaining the process of negotiation that allows us to accept a false situation: “This is the part where we suspend our disbelief. By allowing ourselves to imagine daily life” (Thorpe, 2012). The unexpected parallel between the Guimarães imaginary and Chinese commercial pragmatism sets up an ironic game that asks the audience — via a reference to the performance’s own ontological condition — to suspend its disbelief — just like Escher’s hand drawing itself. In Philatélie [Philately] (written by Miguel Rocha and directed by Jorge Andrade in 2005), theatre serves as a laboratory for the conceptual exploration of fictionalisation procedures — a possible key with which to decode an itinerary privileging circumlocution and constant changes of processes and materials. Three people submerged in darkness, sitting around a table, use technical apparatus to reveal the delicate objects in hand and to perform: Jorge Andrade has a microphone and reads a text, Miguel Rocha arranges stamps before a camera which films, Sérgio Delgado handles the sound machinery. Iconographic analysis is the focus and is presented in literal close-up: the stamps appear on a screen, enlarged by a magnifier and described by an fictional stamp-collector whose technical explanations alternate with clarifications surrounding the recorded images, revealing the ideology behind the images being shown. A commemorative stamp celebrating Fernão Mendes Pinto’s book, Peregrinação, introduces a first-person narrative together with the possibility that the factual accounts are in fact false: “If I lied it’s out of a love of life and a love of art” (Rocha, 2005).

Verisimilitude and the use of documentary testimonies, which lend the stories credibility, are brought into confrontation with one another in the construction of Moçambique [Mozambique] — a biographical-
Dead End, by Chris Thorpe | dir. Jorge Andrade | mala voadora, 2012
Anabela Almeida, Jani Zhao, Joana Bárcia, Jorge Andrade, Mónica Garnel, Rui Lima,
Sérgio Martins, Simão Cayatte, Tânia Alves, Chen Renyu, Hu Yifan, Huang Jianping,
Jiang Rui, Liu Weichi, Wang Binyu, Zang Xiaobin et al. | photo João Octávio Peixoto
music-documentary theatre piece underlined by a sense that “we shouldn’t worry about the truth if it prevents us from telling a good story” (Andrade, 2016). The performance’s conception dates back to 2010, the year in which Jorge Andrade, born in Mozambique, went back to the country he had left, together with his parents, following the April Revolution of 1974. He was hosted by his uncle, who invited him to join him in business. It was a situation which, somehow or other, was history repeating itself. In 1984, when Jorge was ten years old, his aunt, who had recently lost two children, had asked her sister if her nephew could remain with her. From 2010 onwards, Jorge Andrade thought about what would have happened if he had stayed in Africa, and, in 2015, he did two residencies in Mozambique, with the idea of re-writing his life: he read biographies and memoirs. He also danced. And soon enough he realised that he would need to know about the country’s political and economic history. He delved into literature on the civil war, and into documentaries from the archive of the Mozambique National Cinema and Audiovisual Institute — short films on the country’s development that had been distributed to the population by the government throughout the 1970s and 80s. Once back in Portugal, he began writing the script and working with the actors Bruno Huca, Isabé Zuaa, Jani Zhao, Matamba Joaquim, Tânia Alves and Welket Bungué. For two months, rehearsals took place around the director’s desk, in a room at the Maria Matos Theatre and in the Espaço do Tempo, in Montemor. The text was discussed at length, with the value of each word coming
under scrutiny until each of the actors knew the piece as well as Jorge Andrade himself, who was re-writing the plot. The play was finished just ten days before the opening performance, at which point the actors took to the stage. The performance premiered on the 16th September 2016, with the announcement in the programme for the Teatro Municipal do Porto — Rivoli, Campo Alegre that: “Jorge Andrade will form part of Mozambique’s History” accompanied by six actors hired to play Mozambicans, of which only Bruno Huca truly fit the part. The family’s biographical notes were given out by Jorge Andrade at the start of the performance, without the audience knowing very well what was fact and what was fiction. It was all in fact true, except Andrade’s uncle’s profession — he had been a landowner and also had a petrol station, not a tomato purée factory. On the stage, the pseudo-biography is presented by the group and discussed before the audience whilst on a screen, excerpts of the short documentary films are shown, prompting a varied range of readings by the actors, according to what fits the fictionalised narrative. But the meandering insertion of Andrade and Sons Investments’ Agricultural Exploration Plan is merely a pretext on which to speak of a country’s history between 1984 — the year in which hurricane-induced floods destroyed harvests and displaced thousands of people — and 1993, when a period of extreme drought condemned thousands more to starvation. The play also discusses failure: the failure of policies driven by the cynicism of profitable war, the failure of collective memory, and, finally, the failure of fictional narrative. Unsatisfied with the path trodden by History and the stories that are told, the actors decide to change dramatic tack, coming up with a new plot in ten minutes. No one died, the rain fell, peace came and no one was afraid. And Jorge went to live on a tropical island with his uncle and aunt, happily ever after.

Parody — ironic or truly scathing — is common in mala voadora performances, in which events, amplified by excess, often result in absurdity. In O Duplo [The Double] (directed by Jorge Andrade in 2009), for example, final apotheosis is delayed by a long sequence of film clips showing people dying. The collage of agony scenes is drawn out over twenty minutes. And, while blood gushes and squirts abundantly, Bruno Huca and Ana Brandão show off their gifted vocal talents, singing the soundtracks from action films, counteracting Jorge Andrade’s stillness as the actor/character, sharply dressed (James Bond? An actor at an awards ceremony?) stares into the audience for the performance’s 45 minute duration. He never moves so much as a finger. But, as we know, the characters don’t die. Less evident though, is their capacity to reach any artificial eternity. Real/Show (2009), whose title emphasises the paradox surrounding the reality of fiction, focuses on the presence of thousands of figures who do not exist, but who form (or deform) us from a very young age (Ulysses, Cinderella, Tarzan, Peter Pan, Dracula), reminding us, in the words of Maria Augusta Babo, that “the embodied imaginary of mass media images, is nowadays more real than reality itself, given that image production embeds itself so thoroughly that it can occupy, and inhibit, one’s imagination” (Babo, 1996: 7).
What I Heard About the World (mala voadora and Third Angel, 2010), a play about the universal need to insert “false” elements into one’s life, was inspired by the “flat daddies” which formed part of a Maine Army National Guard programme. “Flat daddies” are life-size printed photographs of soldiers, which were given to the families of soldiers away on missions to Iraq or Afghanistan. Jorge Andrade narrates the story of a child who became so attached to its cardboard daddy that it lost all interest in the daily contact that its actual father had maintained. This example beautifully illustrates the idea of reality’s substitution by fiction, even when there is a clear distinction between the two. Or, to return to Babo’s analysis, “image production by modern-day technological devices, from cinema to photography to the ‘small screen’, is substituting the real itself” (Babo, 1996: 7).

Mala voadora’s artistic trajectory continues to pursue constant self-referential reflection, using the stage as a space for questioning the unstable place of fiction in art and life, celebrating its inconstant and volatile nature.

**Here, is the time of the sayable. Here is its home**

*Duino Elegies, Rilke*

“I don’t like revolutions. I like refinement”, declares Miguel Loureiro. The conservatism of the actor and director who runs the 3/quartos collective is connected to his “obsession with beginnings”, which brought him to study the historical and philosophical roots of artistic movements, and of the works and authors that sustain 20th and 21st century art and thought. However, erudition is not an end but rather a means by which Miguel Loureiro feeds his ideas for the stage, the focus of which falls upon the formal and primary elements of staging. His founding of the 3/quartos company in 2011 was accompanied by the opening of Pastoral, based on the Crisfal eclogue (1543–1546) by Cristóvão Falcão (1512?–1557?) — a springtime love poem, recited in the dark. In their pre-dramatic form, the verses carry a candidness and simplicity that, according to Miguel Loureiro, go against “the tricks of theatre”.

The 3/quartos collective is made up of Sara Graça (actress, producer), Vera Kalantrupmann (actress, costume designer), Francisco Goulão (actor), Helena Nogueira-Silva (design, visuals) and Tiago Martins (sound) — whose work echoes the tone of the director’s programming vision. Miguel Loureiro’s project spans to include work about performance, “theological scene” and a classical inheritance. Performance’s instantaneity — its temporary nature — equips it with the opportunity to embroider “its commentary”, as happens in Juanita Castro (2008) or Experimentalismo Social [Social Experimentalism] (2013). Upon launching himself into the vanguard, which literally refers to the advance guard of an army, the director blazes a trail and tests out a territory, but “the performances are just the footnotes” to a much vaster system. The different paths converge in their search for a formal essence, for the miniscule life-source from which developments emerge. Genres — like recital — forgotten by the euphoria of experimentalism, are revived in spaces suitable for such close encounters with the poetic word.
Nos Bosques Profundamente Silenciosos das Montanhas Trácias,
based on Virgil, Ovid and Claudio Monteverdi
(Alice Medeiros and João Villas-Boas) | photo Hibou de Gris
In 2013, in the Ribeira venue, audiences were invited to exercise their ears with Nos Bosques Profundamente Silenciosos das Montanhas Trácias [In the Profoundly Silent Woods of the Thracian Mountains], based on Ovid, Virgil and Monteverdi. In 2015, Do Natural [After Nature], by W. G. Sebald, was spoken in the São Luiz Teatro Municipal’s Winter Garden, with Francisco Goulão, Gonçalo Ferreira de Almeida and Miguel Loureiro; In Hora Mortis, by Thomas Bernhard, was performed in the Teatro Taborda Chapel, with Sara Graça and Miguel Loureiro.

Rainer Maria Rilke’s poem, Vida de Maria [Life of Mary], recited in the Winter Garden of the São Luiz Teatro Municipal in 2011, as a call to holiness — an act of insurrection against the atheism and cynicism of our age — forms part of the so-called “theological scene”; in the performance’s synopsis, the challenge is set: “this performance is a prayer. This performance is a militant act. This performance should be a gentle breeze” (Loureiro, 2011). Miguel Loureiro’s staging work translates his love of the poetic word into contemplative reflections on the force of presence, enunciation, phrasing, and the distribution of voice. This artistic examination doesn’t, however, end up in an aestheticisation of forms, instead proposing a return to the sacred, a religare to origins and the start of it all. Because Miguel Loureiro has the nerve to believe in God. In 2013, in Primeiros Sintomas’ cosy Ribeira room, together with Crista Alfaiaete and Sara Graça, the collective proposed an event based around the complex thinking of Simone Weil, as a philosopher who establishes a link between a Greek legacy and Christianity: Estudos, Notas e Apontamentos Gregos de Simone Weil [Simone Weil’s Studies, Notes and Greek Jottings].

Poetics of disquiet end quietly. Or perhaps not.
As we approach the 2020s, the members of the various collectives discussed here are forging plans and taking on new responsibilities. Mickaël de Oliveira is taking his own texts to the stage: A Constituição [The Constitution] (2016), Sócrates Tem de Morrer [Socrates Must Die] (2017). John Romão is the artistic director of BoCA — Biennial of Contemporary Art (first edition: March 2017). Jorge Andrade, José Capela and Vânia Rodrigues are in charge of programming for mala voadora in Oporto, where, in the old iron warehouse in the Rua do Almada, artistic residencies, performances, workshops and conferences have been hosted since 2013. With no fear of exhaustion, the artists reinvent themselves, persisting in creating instruments with which to reflect on the present, on the troubling history that is developing around us, and of which we form a part.
NOTES

1 Information on these creative processes comes from conversations with the collectives’ directors: with John Romão and Mickaël de Oliveira on the 19th December 2016, 22nd and 23rd February 2017; with Jorge Andrade and José Capela on the 11th November 2016 and 23rd February 2017; with Martim Pedroso on the 19th December 2016; and with Miguel Loureiro and Sara Graça on the 6th March 2017.

2 Clarifications offered by Statt Miller via email (7th March 2017)

3 In 2005, John Romão attended the Nouvelle École des Maîtres international course (Thierry Salmon project), which was, that year, led by Rodrigo García. Since 2006, he has accompanied the director as an artistic and dramatic director’s assistant.

4 The Curso de Encenação de Teatro (Theatre Staging Course) — part of the Gulbenkian Artistic Creativity and Creation Programme (“Programa Gulbenkian Criatividade e Criação Artística”) — ran between the 5th July and 17th September 2004, in partnership with the theatre company Third Angel.

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