

Russo, Letizia

(1980)



Letizia Russo began her work as a playwright at the age of seventeen with the play *Dialogo fra Pulcinella e Gesù* (winner of the Grizane Cavour-Grizanescritura competition which led to *Niente e Nessuno* in 2000). But it was with *Tomba di Cani*, the play which earned her the Tondelli prize in 2001 and the Ubu revelation of the year award in 2003, that the Italian playwright earned the recognition of Italian critics. In 2002, she wrote *Asfissia*, a play commissioned by the Festival di Candoni- Arta Terme, and several radio plays (*I Conigli Sulla Luna*, *Lo Spirito Nell'acqua*, *La Via Del Maré*, *Qoèlet*, *Kilmainam Gaol*) broadcast by RAI13. Her time at the Royal Court Theatre in London, in 2002, where she participated in the theatre's International Residency, and the writing of *Binario Morto* (2004), commissioned by the NT Connections Festival of the National Theatre, became two decisive moments for her international presence. Following this came *Babel* (2004), which premiered at the Teatro dei Rinnovati in Naples, *Primo Amore* (2005), which premiered at the Garofano Verde Festival in Rome, both directed by Paolo Zuccari, and *Edeyen* (2005), presented at the Ortiga festival (Syracuse, Sicily), directed by Fausto Russo Alesi.

Letizia Russo's work first came to the Portuguese stage in July 2004, during the Almada Festival, during which the Artistas Unidos company staged readings of *Binario Morto* (translated as *Fim de Linha*), and of excerpts of *Tomba di Cani* (translated as *Túmulo de Cães*), both translated by Pedro Marques. Between 2004 and 2005, Letizia Russo was writer in residence at Artistas Unidos, supported by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. From this resulted two texts: *Poesia sem título* (2005), a short text included in the *Conferência de Imprensa e Outras Aldrabices* performance, staged in honour of Harold Pinter, and *Os Animais Domésticos* (originally titled *Gente de Lisboa* and presenting a fresco of Lisbon, following the stories of around twenty characters which cross and intertwine), both of them directed by Jorge Silva Melo and debuted at the Teatro Nacional D. Maria II in 2005. During this period, Letizia Russo undertook the translation of short texts by contemporary

Russo, Letizia

Italian authors into Portuguese (*A Coxa vai parir mas o bebé quer lá saber de nascer* by Antonio Tarantino, *A Terra vista do mar* by Davide Enia and *O Envelope* by Spiro Scimone), all of them part of the *Conferência de Imprensa e Outras Aldrabices* performance and published in the Livrinhos de Teatro collection (Artistas Unidos / Livros Cotovia, 2005).

Recently, Culturgest's PANOS – palcos novos novas palavras project, which, much like the Connections programme at London's National Theatre, seeks to tie new dramaturgy and school/youth theatre, included, in its third edition (May 2008) the Italian playwright's *Fim de Linha*, published in a collection which also included texts by the British writer Dennis Kelly and the Portuguese writers Patrícia Portela and Luísa Costa Gomes (Culturgest, 2008).

Travels

Portugal, England, Italy.

.

Quotations

DOG 2

By these tears I'm shedding. At least we now know I was the bitch. That crying isn't for dogs. For male dogs. You see. You see it would probably be better if we had stayed here. Getting kicked and scraps of food. Or maybe not. Maybe it would be worse, I don't know. I don't know which of us is worse off now. Maybe you just ran ahead and I'll find you when I get to the river. In the eyes of some frog or the leap of some fish. I was the bitch. I was the male. By these tears I'm shedding I can only say that they did not even kill the other half of me. I needed some. Some of that black water about now. Pity I drank all of it. I could use it, to run faster. To get to the river first. To look for you in the eyes of some frog or the leap of some fish. Or maybe I'll throw myself under one of these things that move so fast and meet you

Russo, Letizia

now. But no. You know it well. I'll take the slow route. Head hung. I'll arrive at the river deep  
in the night.

(*Os Animais Domésticos, Túmulos de Cães*: 96) (translated)

we won't see each other again

I told them, my things

someone always has to do it

someone always has to leave

unfortunate are you

I am leaving now

and of me remains my reverse

the dust

on you which falls on you

which grows like hair

and then shall you understand

the time that has passed.

(*Poesia sem título*: 118) (translated)

Russo, Letizia

### Selected primary bibliography

RUSSO, Letizia (2004), *Babel*, trans. Pedro Marques, in *Artistas Unidos Revista*, no. 11, Julho, Lisbon, Artistas Unidos / Livros Cotovia, pp. 124-141.

— (2005a), *Os Animais Domésticos, Túmulo de Cães*, trans. Jorge Silva Melo, José Lima, and Pedro Marques, *Livrinhos de Teatro*, no. 10, Lisbon, Artistas Unidos / Livros Cotovia.

— (2005b), *Poesia sem título*, trans. Jorge Silva Melo, in AA.VV, *Conferência de Imprensa e Outras Aldrabices*, *Livrinhos de Teatro*, special number, Lisbon, Artistas Unidos / Livros Cotovia, pp. 116-122.

— (2008), *Fim de Linha*, trans. Pedro Marques, in AA.VV, *PANOS, Palcos novos palavras novas*, Lisbon, Culturgest.

### Selected critical bibliography

CAETANO, Maria João (2005), “Os Animais Domésticos somos nós”, *Diário de Notícias*, “Artes” section, 22 September.

FRATUS, Tiziano (2005), “Cinco actos de um teatro da matéria e da morte por Letizia Russo”, in *Artistas Unidos Revista*, no. 14, November, pp. 2-10.

— (2004c), “A língua que queima - novas dialécticas teatrais na dramaturgia contemporânea italiana”, in *Artistas Unidos Revista*, no. 11, July, pp. 142-144.

FRAZÃO, Francisco (2008), “Introdução”, in AA.VV, *PANOS, Palcos novos palavras novas*, Lisbon, Culturgest, pp. 9-13.

QUADRI, Franco (2004), “A dramaturgia em Itália e a língua”, in *Artistas Unidos Revista*, no. 11, July, pp. 2-7.

Russo, Letizia

SILVA MELO, Jorge (2005), “Em carne viva, Os Animais Domésticos - A cicatriz do meu lado”, in *Artistas Unidos Revista*, no. 14, November, pp. 12-27.

**Alexandra Moreira da Silva (2011/11/14)**