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Laughter and Repression in Mid-Twentieth Century Drama in Portugal and Brazil

By

Catarina de Morais Gama

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Hispanic Languages and Literatures

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

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Professor Candace Slater, Co-Chair

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Summer 2023

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Candace Slater, Co-Chair

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In this dissertation, I examine how laughter functioned as a feature of and response to theatrical performance in mid-twentieth-century Portugal and Brazil, especially during periods of dictatorial rule. Underlying my approach is the idea that repressive regimes—such as the Estado Novo in Portugal and the 1964-1985 military dictatorship in Brazil—perpetrate violence beyond the damage they inflict on the body: they also attack subjectivity, creativity, the senses, and modes of expression. In the face of this violence, Brazilian and Portuguese theater practitioners actively sought to elicit laughter from their audiences. My main argument is that one cannot understand the development of modern Portuguese and Brazilian theater in the twentieth century without understanding their turn to popular musical theater (particularly revue) in relation to laughter and mechanisms of state repression. As a corollary of this argument, I push against the common binary distinction between “serious” and “light” theater in Lusophone theater studies. I argue that the theoretical and aesthetic connections between popular revue and revolutionary drama in Portugal and Brazil are analogous to those between German cabaret/revue and Bertolt Brecht’s epic theater. In the end, the plays I analyze develop local epic theatricalities that break down distinctions between “popular” and “serious” theater.

I employ interdisciplinary research methods throughout this dissertation. Beyond close readings of primary sources and the development of a theoretical framework through which to present those readings, I also analyze historical texts in order to situate the works and authors under review.

In Chapter 1, I argue that *Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa* and its complex relation with laughter are central to any adequate understanding of modern Portuguese theater. Throughout the twentieth century, revue provided an embodied experience that challenged decorum. For this and other reasons, Portugal’s dictatorship sought to censor it. In Chapter 2, I analyze Bernardo Santareno’s *O Judeu* (1966), arguing that Santareno employs laughter as a rhetorical and dialectic tool to promote critical thinking, even in contexts where seriousness and violence prevail. In Chapter 3, I focus on Brazilian revolutionary theater pre-1964, with a special emphasis on Augusto Boal’s *Revolução na América do Sul* (1960) and Oduvaldo Vianna Filho’s *A Mais Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar* (1960-61). I contend that both playwrights developed (Marxist) Brazilian epic theatricalities (largely through elements of revue that provoke laughter and produce a distancing

effect) while maintaining a recognizably nationalist framework. In Chapter 4, I examine leftist theatrical practices in the wake of Brazil's 1964 military coup, looking in particular at Vianna Filho and Ferreira Gullar's *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* (1966). Despite state censorship, this play continued the Brazilian turn to a localized form of epic theater that questioned sociopolitics through laughter; central to its power is the introduction of *cordel* devices. Through an analysis of laughter in mid-century theatrical texts and productions, I argue that modern Portuguese and Brazilian theater developed through the strategic incorporation of multiple genres and devices on either side of the supposed divide between "serious" and "popular" theater. In many cases, laughter served as a powerful and enduring tool to challenge state repression.

Dedicated to those who dare to laugh.

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Berlin, Germany
June 2, 2023

Overture

Laughter was as universal as seriousness.
Bakhtin

I.

“Miss,” a middle-aged man asked me, “could you please not laugh so loudly?” I was with a female friend at a bustling cafeteria in downtown Lisbon, and I still wonder what I did to cause the man such discomfort. Before he asked me to be quiet, he had tried to talk to us. He had asked questions we preferred not to answer and moved his body inappropriately close to mine. I finally told him not to touch me. Surprised by this, and likely by our desire to talk to one another rather than with him, he became visibly frustrated. It was perhaps because of this that he made his comment about my “loud” laughter. But I still had doubts. As we were leaving, I wondered: was he just retaliating, or was he really bothered by my lack of decorum?

Manners and politeness are the foundation of a humanist education, as Erasmus of Rotterdam points out in *Civilitate morum puerilium* (1530): “Only fools use expressions like: ‘I am dissolving with laughter,’ ‘I am bursting with laughter,’ ‘I am dying with laughter’” (qtd. in Parvulescu 25). What emerges, however, when one examines bodies and human sociality from the perspective of indecorous bursts of laughter? Is it a question only of recognizing that we cannot control laughter and that any open-mouthed, loud, rhythmic, and passionate sort of laughter is necessarily a revolt against a closed mouth and “dogmatic solemnity in language, gesture, face, and tone” (Parvulescu 5)?

Despite many theoretical, poetic, and scientific accounts of laughter, it remains an enigma—one that perhaps does not need to be answered, decoded, or explained. Laughter often occurs unexpectedly, triggered spontaneously by ordinary occurrences or memories, unexpected situations, or even by utterances that are somehow deviant or non-normative. We often laugh about “stupid” things or when we are not “supposed to” (as at funerals). We laugh at politicians, at our mothers, at our babies, at our friends, and at our pets. This kind of laughter is available to most of us, and it changes us. Laughter makes sound, it can bother others, and it is often contagious. And again, we do not always know when we are going to laugh, nor do we know when someone else will. As something untranslatable, laughter is often normalized, and we are mostly only conscious of it when it hurts or when it provides an immense release. Almost invisible, it is not difficult to identify, but it belongs to the realm of things that must be experienced to be understood—not in the sense of understanding some sort of hidden meaning but rather an evolving understanding that challenges our self-knowledge and our assumptions about the world around us, including about other people and even whole political systems.

To arrive at any meaningful understanding of laughter, it is necessary to stop trying to control our words and approach things rationally. In other words—and particularly as scholars—we must set aside rigid methodologies, textbook hermeneutics, schools of thought, or anything that might resemble or mirror the architecture and social dynamics of the “academic” or “serious” space. Instead of attempting to explain laughter with fixed and abstract definitions, we might instead look at its performative aspects. How, in other words, does our laughter (and that of others) shape our world and our experience of it? What does laughter *do*? What do we *do* when we laugh? Whatever else might be the case, the laughing body has a performative *quality* that is conditioned by its participation in an unscripted and emergent world. This *quality*, I argue, transmits the social and embodied knowledge (in the Bourdieusian terms of *sens pratique*) that is necessary for us to be human.

II.

In this dissertation, I examine how laughter became a feature of and response to theatrical performance in Portugal and Brazil in the mid-twentieth century, particularly during periods of dictatorial rule. I approach the history of these periods—namely the *Estado Novo* in Portugal and the 1964–1985 military dictatorship in Brazil—in an attempt to look at how the regimes perpetrated violence beyond the damage they inflict on the body (including the senses); and how they also attacked subjectivity, creativity, and expressive modes. Moreover, I delve into how, in the face of this violence, Brazilian and Portuguese theater practitioners actively sought to elicit laughter from their audiences. This tendency varied greatly between state-sponsored, commercial, and independent theater productions, but as I began my investigation, I quickly realized that the traditional distinction between “serious” and “non-serious” theater in Portugal and Brazil was in many instances untenable.¹

I focus on the period between the 1930s and the 1970s, which was marked by dictatorial rule in both Brazil and Portugal. In Brazil, 1930 represents the beginning of the Vargas era, a populist, nationalist and corporatist dictatorship, while 1964 marks the beginning of the military dictatorship that ended in 1985. In Portugal, the period between 1933 and 1974 corresponds to the *Estado Novo* (New State) that followed the 1926 coup and lasted until the Carnation Revolution, which put an end to one of the longest authoritarian regimes in Europe. This periodization also encompasses important periods for the development of the theatrical genres I examine. Generally speaking, the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s were golden decades for revue theater, a type of performance that comprised a pastiche of sketches, connected by musical numbers, somewhat like a variety show, that used humor and satire to mirror the country’s sociopolitical contours. The late 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were pivotal decades for dramatists who followed Bertolt Brecht’s lead in incorporating revue, cabaret, and other forms of comic stagecraft into their revolutionary plays.

Throughout this dissertation, I set up a comparative framework marked by difference and similarity. Portuguese and Brazilian theatrical traditions during the middle of the twentieth century differed not only in terms of what constituted an object of laughter but also in terms of how each nation’s censorship apparatus operated and how people worked to subvert it. At the same time, the similarities between the two traditions suggest that mid-twentieth century drama in both Portugal and Brazil offer examples of transnational and local epic theatricalities that used laughter and humor to challenge state repression. Thus, through my analysis of a series of plays, I examine the different dramaturgical genres and strategies used to make spectators laugh to construct a precise historical account of how each period of authoritarian rule gave rise to certain theatrical responses.

In my readings, I use interdisciplinary research methods. In addition to establishing a recognizably Marxian theoretical framework, I engage in a critical reading of Portuguese and Brazilian theater historiography in order to contextualize the selected periods and authors. I also do a close reading of selected plays, approaching the work of the playwrights. This effort includes acknowledging the differences between dramatic and novelistic or poetic textual analysis, an undertaking that included additional archival and library research (including literary scholarship). Moreover, this research encompasses a critique of scripts (or narrative technique)

¹ Recent scholarship, namely in the field of Performance Studies, has challenged the distinction between “serious” and “non-serious” theater; however, little of this work has adequately theorized the embodied experience of laughter in Lusophone theater.

and stage directions, and my goal is to contribute to a larger critical conversation on laughter, popular theater, and sociopolitical repression.

III.

The comparative work of examining instances of laughter and the establishment of the abovementioned periodization using an interdisciplinary methodology contribute to my overall argument that one cannot comprehend the development of modern Portuguese and Brazilian theater in the mid-twentieth century without understanding the turn to popular musical theater (particularly the genre of revue) in relation to laughter and mechanisms of state repression. Despite the importance of laughter and popular theater during this period, there is relatively little research devoted to this area. One reason for this is that theater and literary critics have tended to divide twentieth-century theatrical production in Portugal and Brazil between “serious” or declamatory theater and “light” theater (i.e., commercial theater that lacked the same “prestige,” at least from an academic point of view). The first category includes the work of practitioners who produced revolutionary theater and were able to resist the socioeconomic and political hardships of their time despite state censorship and scrutiny, such as the Portuguese playwrights Luís de Sttau Monteiro and José Cardoso Pires and the Brazilian practitioners Augusto Boal and Gianfrancesco Guarnieri, among others. It also includes the work of practitioners who produced and performed the so-called classics of Portuguese and Brazilian drama but also of foreign dramatists such as Tennessee Williams or Federico García Lorca. More often than not, these works were not necessarily committed to critiquing the sociopolitical contours of the time and place in which they were presented. Some examples include the productions of the Portuguese national theater (Teatro Nacional D. Maria II) by the *Companhia Rey Colaço-Robles Monteiro* or the work of the Brazilian theater company *Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia*. In both Portugal and Brazil, the second category—“light” theater—has oscillated between a theatrical space of alienation, sexism, and racism and one in which humor and laughter challenges the political system and sociocultural context. It includes productions of revue theater, musical theater, cabaret, storytelling in open-air spaces such as in improvised singer-storytelling and *cordel* literature, and other entertaining theater formats that, despite being influenced by Commedia dell’Arte, were consistent with local idiosyncrasies.

In the aftermath of the dictatorships, some critics such as Luiz Francisco Rebello began to question the binary approach to theater favored in the previous decades. They began to acknowledge the significance of revue and other popular theatrical forms for the development of contemporary drama. More recently, scholars such as Neyde Veneziano have stressed the significance of the turn to humor and laughter for the evolution of theatrical and other artistic practices in the last century, especially in Brazil.

My own attempt to challenge the traditional division between “serious” and “light” theater has led me to focus on Brecht, a key figure in the landscape of mid-twentieth century drama. In fact, the popularity of the German dramatist’s writings in mid-twentieth century Portugal and Brazil directly influenced leftist practitioners who were eager to establish a critique of their environment in the theatrical space. In Brechtian epic theater, these playwrights found a theoretical and technical avenue to achieve that goal, although the censorship apparatus of the Portuguese and Brazilian dictatorships conditioned the circulation and representations of the German dramatist’s work. As a result, they created local epic theatricalities in which the local context and aesthetics merged with their interpretations of Brecht’s and other foreign theorists’

and playwrights' work. As part of this development, revue emerges as a distinct genre with a clear influence. Although this influence lasted longer in Portugal than in Brazil, it was more significant in revolutionary and non-revolutionary theatrical practices in Brazil. Above all, Brecht came up throughout my research on specific plays, including revue theater scripts, and their structure. It quickly became evident that it would be impossible to write about the influence of Brechtian epic theater in Lusophone drama without considering the role of cabaret, popular music, revue, vaudeville, and other forms of commercial entertainment in Brecht's work. As Double and Wilson point out, "drawing from cabaret clearly contributed to Brecht's political agenda for theatre, providing models for *Gestus* and the *Verfremdungseffekt*, but perhaps more importantly it allowed him to declare his aesthetic preferences" (Double and Wilson 59). On this subject, my work is in dialogue with the work of Brazilian authors, such as Iná Camargo Costa, and Portuguese historians of theater, such as Rebello, who have identified the link between revue and Brecht's conception of epic theater. While Rebello focuses on how the structure of Portuguese revue resembles that of epic theater, mainly because each scene exists independently, Costa affirms that playwrights such as Boal drew on Brecht and revue techniques, for example in his play *Revolução na América do Sul* (60).

IV.

My contribution goes beyond the idea that Portuguese and Brazilian authors drew on epic theater *and* revue. Brecht's work was already a collage of different forms of commercial entertainment, so my argument is that Brazilian playwrights built local and "uniquely Brazilian" epic theatricalities that included humor and laughter as rhetorical strategies in addition to employing a dramatic structure and aesthetic choices that resembled Brecht's. As for the Portuguese dramatic landscape, my argument is that while *revista* features, humor, and laughter were not so obviously present, they nevertheless appeared subtly and obliquely. The strong impact of censorship started in Portugal decades before it did in Brazil. Therefore, by the time Brechtian ideas began to circulate more broadly (in the 1950s and 1960s), Portuguese dramatists were writing plays knowing that they would not be performed. Consequently, the text itself and its narrative mechanics became pivotal for playwrights and their readers. Salazar's regime banned the performance of Brecht's plays as well as Portuguese epic theater, while *revistas* continued to occupy an important space in the country's theatrical scene.² Playwrights continued to follow a Brechtian framework, despite not being able to see their work performed onstage. The dramatic narratives written in the 1960s by authors such as Cardoso Pires, Sttau Monteiro, and Bernardo Santareno, to name but a few, became emblematic of a type of narration that used elements from Portuguese history that resembled those that characterized the dictatorial regime and its various forms of inflicting violence. In doing so, these playwrights clearly intended to challenge the reader/audience to examine Portugal's current sociopolitical situation, critique it, and take action.

Contrary to what I found to be the case in Brazil (particularly in the 1950s), Portuguese leftist playwrights were not so focused on "showing Portugal to the Portuguese" or inaugurating a nationalistic and institutionalized rhetoric since, after all, the regime was already doing that. Their concern was to create artistic responses that offered a space of critique and resistance and a rereading of historical narratives. Because Brecht was being read and not performed, many elements of his theater were missing, namely the distancing effect—which was mostly achieved

² Other authors whose works were banned include Jean-Paul Sartre, Eugène Ionesco, Erwin Piscator, and Alfonso Sastre.

through praxis. The fact that Portuguese practitioners for the most part did not have a collective experience of Brecht before the end of the dictatorship and that his reception was limited to translated texts and/or sometimes distorted readings of his oeuvre gave rise to the idea that Brechtian theater was essentially didactic. At the same time, critics such as Mário Vilaça in *Do Teatro Épico* (1966) attempted to clarify that epic theater did not intend to eliminate emotion or the entertaining element of the dramatic experience and should not be mistaken for propaganda or thesis plays (Rodrigues 48). Nevertheless, and even though there was little opportunity for experimentation on stage, some of the plays inspired by epic theater employed rhetorical devices such as caricature and satire to establish a critique of the Portuguese sociopolitical context.

Despite the circumstances of his work's reception, Brecht was an unequivocally central figure for mid-twentieth century Portuguese and Brazilian theater. Dramatists questioned their social reality using formalist techniques that created the conditions of possibility for laughter. This laughter in turn opened the door to critical thinking, and it turned dramatists themselves into important theorists. Given this, the particularities of Luso-Brazilian local theatricalities and sociopolitical contexts have driven my comparative analysis. Just as Brecht considered the local dramatic and contextual idiosyncrasies of the time and place in which he was writing, so did the Lusophone authors I consider in this dissertation. Of course, both the sociopolitical context and the cultural landscapes of were different, so there are limitations to this comparative analysis. Nevertheless, I believe that the popular theater that developed in these two countries in the mid-twentieth century gave birth to epic theatricalities whose distancing effect created the possibility of laughter and, therefore, of critique. Consequently, by looking at these mid-century theatrical texts and productions, it is possible to embrace the spectrum of ambiguities and fluidities of the regimes of laughter and repression in modern Lusophone drama.

V.

Together with Brecht, a key influence in the early stages of this dissertation was the work of Anca Parvulescu, who states that we lack the language to talk about laughter. As a result, any attempt to understand laughter ultimately becomes a question of actively listening to what our senses offer us (9). In *Laughter: Notes on a Passion* (2010), Parvulescu's interest in the multiple senses connected to laughter leads to an important consideration of the parts of the body involved in the act of laughing: the eyes, ears, mouth, nose, diaphragm, and lungs, among others. It also leads, more specifically, to an account of the connections between laughter and language in Lusophone theater. Like Parvulescu, my goal has been to develop ways to read laughter closely and unpack its many nuances. As Parvulescu suggests:

[Reading laughter] is a voyage into the microscopic, into the difference of the bit of nuance. It is also an exercise of closeness, in intimacy. Close reading, or close listening, is intimate reading. An infinite spectrum of nuances – tones, timbres, accents, resonances – unfold in laughter. And yet we do not quite have the vocabulary to talk about laughter. Language has grown poorer and poorer, and [it] insists on imposing the same word (“laughter”) on laughs that—ontologically, aesthetically, ethically—often find themselves at opposite ends of the laughing spectrum. Description is an attempt to soften this injustice. (9)

Like Milan Kundera's earlier analysis of angelic and demonic laughter in the context of socialist regimes (especially in his native Bohemia), Parvulescu's analysis makes it clear that context matters and therefore a “distant reading” (Moretti) of humor is likely not feasible.

As I continued researching for this project, I was confident that I would have extensive access to theater archives in Brazil and Portugal. However, this did not guarantee that I would be able to produce the sort of “microscopic” account of laughter that I wanted to, precisely because I was looking at a historical period where the censorship apparatus and state-mediated sources (reviews, photographs, testimonies, etc.) deeply influenced what was said, published, and performed. I was prepared for these obstacles; however, roughly two months after I began my initial research, the Covid-19 pandemic forced the closure of all the archives and libraries I had intended to visit. During lockdown, I was forced, along with much of the world, to remain at home and limit my contact with others. Faced with these unforeseen conditions, I needed to listen differently. I could still listen closely, but I would no longer have access to voices that had witnessed certain theatrical productions or had contact with the practitioners. These sources and archives were closed to me. Beyond this, the lockdown and social distancing of the Covid-19 pandemic made my own world shrink, producing in me sentiments analogous to repression and fear. Could I buy food at the store? Could I walk my dog? None of this was clear, at least during those early months.

As I pushed forward with my work, I found myself obliged to rearticulate my project. I quickly realized I would need to rely primarily on textual analysis and much less on testimonials and archival materials. It is for this reason that the printed text of plays and a more curated selection of archival documents (gathered in the aftermath of the pandemic) constitute the raw material of this dissertation. In the end, I reconfigured Parvulescu’s suggestions and began to look at intimate listening as an exercise in intimate close reading. This involved looking for the potential for laughter and imagining the audience laughing in response to the defamiliarization of the familiar. I also worked assiduously to engage with other theorists and critics for whom the question of what makes people laugh is a central concern, a process that necessarily led me to debates around humor and comicality.

IV.

In Chapter 1, inspired by the ruins of Parque Mayer (commonly referred to as “Portugal’s Broadway”), I analyze Portuguese revue theater—*Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa*—during the Salazar dictatorship. Throughout the chapter, I argue that it is not possible to understand the development of modern Portuguese theater without understanding *Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa* and its complex relation with laughter. I also show the reader that *revista* did not only offer escapist “entertainment” but also used humor and laughter to mock aspects of the dictatorship, creating spaces of critique. First, I show that *revista* challenged the sensorial model of the Portuguese dictatorial regime. Second, I demonstrate that the purpose of *revista* was to make people laugh, particularly the petty bourgeoisie who attended the shows. It was a manufactured and ephemeral laughter, restricted to the time and space of the show, but it made theatergoers feel “free,” at least temporarily, within a capitalistic and oppressive framework. Third, I examine twelve *revista* scripts whose content varies from provoking “dictatorial laughter” to “hiding” criticism of the regime. Overall, by pointing out the spaces of critique in *revista*, this chapter challenges the traditional division between “serious” and “non-serious” or “light” theater in Portugal.

Scholarship on *Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa* and Parque Mayer are critical for the first chapter, largely because these topics have traditionally been marginalized within Portuguese theater studies. The work of Rebello, Vítor Pavão Santos, Jorge Trigo and Luciano Reis has been

pivotal for my own study of revue theater and “Portugal’s Broadway.” Pavão was the first to publish on Portuguese revue theater between 1856 and 1969, while Rebello’s volumes on the history of *Teatro de Revista* between the late nineteenth-century and 1984 were the first to systematize and to present a genealogy of the genre in the country. The work of Trigo and Reis is a reference in the literature about Parque Mayer, particularly in terms of how they approach the space and its activities in a historical and descriptive way. More recently, Isabel Vidal has offered valuable insights into theatrical activity in Portugal in the 1930s. To understand the mechanisms used by state censors, she analyzes twenty-six plays (including *revistas*), paying particular attention to passages that the censors cut and similar ones that they somehow missed or accepted. It is intriguing that Vidal ends up focusing on *revistas*. She justifies this decision, arguing that they provide more information about censorship mechanisms and criteria than any other theatrical genre. Vidal also focuses on authorship and resources employed to produce a comic effect, concluding that censors were more permissive with *revista* than with other genres. According to her, the critical tradition of this type of spectacle allowed for sociopolitical issues to be reduced to an object of laughter without necessarily encouraging political mobilization against the regime. In this sense, the satire produced in the context of *revista* could in fact contribute to the maintenance of the regime. I agree with Vidal on most points; however, I maintain that while *revistas* did not represent a direct threat to the regime, they did create a discursive and performative space in which the public could escape Salazar’s sensorial model. This effect alone is representative of less acknowledged spaces of resistance to the regime. In 2013, Isa Monteiro da Costa analyzed a corpus of twenty-five *revista* scripts produced by professional theater companies based in Lisbon during the 1930s. To fill the research gap that still existed then, Costa focused on the relation between the censorship commission and revue scripts to understand censorship criteria and identify the most censored themes. Additionally, she examined the musical component of *revista*, which has been key for my own understanding of music’s role in the overall structure of the genre. Another important contribution for Chapter 1 is Graça dos Santos’s *O espetáculo desvirtuado: o teatro português sob o reinado de Salazar* (2004). Santos traces the history of the theater during the years of Salazar’s rule and the distinctions made at the time between declamatory, *revista*, university, and amateur theater. She focuses on the impact of António Ferro’s propaganda policies, which were largely responsible for the psychological repression imposed by the dictatorial regime.

In Chapter 2, I analyze *O Judeu* (1966) by the Portuguese dramatist Santareno. This analysis also advances the overall aims of the dissertation as it puts forward the idea that laughter in repressive regimes can function as a distancing technique and, consequently, encourage critical thinking. I begin the chapter by presenting some biographical details about Santareno’s life. Since most of the playwright’s plays were censored or banned, his biography, letters, and police surveillance records reveal his internal drama and disquiet. Moreover, they inform the evolution of his dramaturgy from a naturalist to an epic one in dialogue with the establishment of spaces of critique. In this chapter, I also deconstruct the binary between “serious” and “light” theater. Based on a close reading of Santareno’s play, I argue that laughter appears not as a physiological reaction or as a phenomenon exclusively contingent upon humorous objects (as is common in revue) but as a rhetorical and dialectic reaction that promotes critical thinking on the part of the audience, even in contexts where seriousness prevails. I read *O Judeu* in light of several literary strategies, including the use of the narrative and “play(s) within the play,” from Brecht’s epic theater. I also focus on the characters that represent a crowd within the play. The various members of the crowd use Dionysian laughter to incite violence against the Jews, which

I argue operates as a distancing technique. Additionally, I look at Santareno's representation of the play's protagonist, the eighteenth-century dramatist António José da Silva, as another example of how popular theater, farce, and comedy represented spaces of critique in twentieth-century Portugal. Moreover, by looking at laughter as a distancing technique in Portuguese Marxist-oriented theater, this chapter contributes to the discussion on the dialectic between laughter and seriousness as "two sides of the same coin" rather than separate, unidimensional concepts, even when laughter appears in the form of brief comical interludes.

Santareno's work has received more scholarly attention than *revista* as a genre (and its authors), notably in the aftermath of the 1974 revolution that ended Salazar's regime. *O Judeu* became one of Santareno's most studied plays, possibly because the Ministry of Education made it a required text in Portuguese high schools as artists that had been censored during the *Estado Novo* became a central part of public discussions after 1974. Santareno belonged to the group of leftist writers who produced "serious" theater and enjoyed a good deal of cultural capital even after his death in 1980. Despite his post-revolutionary prestige, however, there is not a large body of secondary literature devoted to his work. Looking specifically at *O Judeu*, literary critics have focused on the metonymic aspects of the play, which is set during the Inquisition but also refers to the dictatorship whose repressive apparatuses resembled those of the Roman Catholic tribunal. They have also focused on the Brechtian epic theater techniques that Santareno uses in conjunction with some characteristics of tragedy. These include, among others, the figure of the narrator and the projection of slides, which break the fourth wall and create a distancing effect. Something that I advance in this dissertation that I have not seen discussed in any other work is Santareno's emphasis on laughter, which can be seen in his development of the play's protagonist, Da Silva.

In Chapter 3, I focus on revolutionary theater and theatrical innovation in the years leading up to the military coup in Brazil. I examine work associated with the *Teatro de Arena* and the *União Nacional de Estudantes* (UNE), paying particular attention to Boal's *Revolução na América do Sul* (1960) and Oduvaldo Vianna Filho's *A Mais Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar* (1960-61). In both cases, I demonstrate how these playwrights developed Brazilian epic theatricalities (namely through elements of revue that provoke laughter and create a distancing effect) while maintaining a nationalist and anti-capitalist framework. I dialogue with Veneziano, who offers a historical and descriptive account of the aesthetic trajectory of *Teatro de Revista Brasileiro*. Veneziano demonstrates *revista*'s focus on performativity and its relation to the audience. She also argues that the ephemerality of the spectacle and its conventions, which give the genre an open and unfinished character that belongs to the "liveness" of the moment, call into question the genre's literariness. Another key aspect of Veneziano's work is how she illustrates the connections between *revista* and Brechtian epic theater. Additionally, she stresses the contribution of the genre to the cultural decolonization of Brazilian theater.³ This aspect is key to understanding the relationship between *revista* and leftist theater that intended to "show Brazil to Brazilians" before and after the Brazilian military dictatorship. I build on Veneziano's arguments in this chapter, delving into the multiple scenarios of laughter evoked by the selected

³ The question of theatrical decolonization goes beyond the space of *revista* since, as demonstrated by Leonardo Ramos de Toledo, it is connected more broadly with laughter. Inspired by Bakhtin, Toledo tells us that laughter appears as a reaction against the colonizer: "As colonized and oppressed people, our laughter comes as an element of revenge against the colonizer. In the spontaneity of this manifestation, we can see a precious angle to understand Brazil and, above all, the Brazilian people" (8). This connection is an interesting avenue for further research.

dramatic texts. Throughout the chapter, I show how the playwrights broke the fourth wall and created a sense of distancing by weaving together different theatrical techniques associated with comic and formal elements from farce and revue theater. I also expose how they included extra-textual features on stage, such as choruses and posters, and other Brechtian techniques that suggest a dialogue between revolutionary theater and local theatricalities, analogous to what Brecht himself did. Drawing on these aspects, this chapter proposes a new reading of how Brazilian playwrights co-created new and liminal theatricalities or a local version of epic theater before 1964—one that, by including *teatro de revista* techniques, somewhat “cannibalized” (as Oswald de Andrade would say) the contextualized aesthetical collage proposed by Brecht in Central Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. This reading contributes to my overall argument that the relationship between laughter and repression is paramount to understanding modern Brazilian theater in mid-twentieth century.

In Chapter 4, I investigate some leftist theatrical practices that followed the 1964 military coup. Of particular interest is Vianna Filho and Ferreira Gullar’s *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* (1966). Despite state censorship, this play continued the turn to new epic theatricalities in which laughter served to offer the spectator a critique of the sociopolitical contours of Brazilian society, namely through the introduction of *cordel* devices. In the first section of the chapter, I show that the sociopolitical context of authoritarianism affected theater productions in the form of censorship and other forms of repression. I also expose the contours of cultural production under dictatorial regimes to understand the array of epic theatricalities used in mid-twentieth-century Brazilian theater, particularly in works produced by leftist practitioners. In the second section, I focus on the theater collective Grupo Opinião to show how they used laughter and reflections about the Northeast region of Brazil in their conception and development of new theatricalities that were more in agreement (aesthetically and contextually) with Brazilian reality. I emphasize Vianna Filho (Vianninha) and Gullar’s *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* (1966), a play that introduces popular musical, rhythmic, and rhetorical devices such as those used in *literatura de cordel* in conversation with Brechtian epic theater. I argue that, with this play, Grupo Opinião aimed to create laughable and satirical scenes to expose the clash (or impasse) between political abuse supported by corrupt Brazilian institutions and power structures on the one hand and the need for social, cultural, and political change on the other.

For Chapters 3 and 4, I take my inspiration from David George’s book *The Modern Brazilian Stage*, in which he employs a performance-centered approach to analyze the connections between theatrical languages and the sociopolitical context of Brazil between the 1940s and the 1980s. George focuses on several theater companies, including Teatro de Arena and Teatro Oficina. Through a comparative analysis, he concludes that modern Brazilian theater established a local and national aesthetic that was no longer dependent on foreign influences. The work of these theater companies and the debates around them have encouraged me to delve into the connections between repression and theater militancy in Brazil, which has, in turn, contributed to my understanding that revolutionary theater and spaces of laughter coexisted in Brazil in the mid-twentieth century.

Throughout the chapters, I am also in dialogue with several secondary works that critically explore the work of Boal and Vianninha. Some authors, such as Mileni Roéfero, have looked at the work of these two authors in dialogue with Brechtian and Marxist ideas, which has helped establish a connection between revolutionary theater and the Brazilian historical landscape of the mid-twentieth century. Others, such as Thaís Leão Vieira, have focused on the

role of laughter and humor in Vianninha’s work. Vieira’s focal point is the ambiguities found in Vianninha’s humor in dialogue with classical humor, politically engaged humor, and comic theater at the beginning of the twentieth century in Brazil (163). She analyses the social landscape of a politically and artistically engaged leftist middle class between the 1950s and 1970s, which was a fertile and effervescent period for the modernization of the country, the development of communication systems, and the blossoming of new artistic expressions (181).⁴ She also provides a detailed assessment of Brazilian scholarship on laughter and humor. Additionally, she discusses how theater critics such as Gustavo Dória and Décio de Almeida Prado, who largely contributed to the establishment of the modern Brazilian theater canon, deprecated theatrical practices pre-1940 and considered comic theater inferior to so-called “serious” theater. According to Vieira, the economic elite watching comedies felt that such spectacles could distract them from their commitment to capital while the leftist intellectual elite felt that the distraction of comedy could interfere with their revolutionary aspirations (254). This mistrust led to multiple readings in which the politicized leftist Brazilian theater of the mid-twentieth century supposedly did not have anything in common with the comic theater developed in the decades prior and was “better positioned” in the hierarchy of what of resistance “should be” (272). Vieira acknowledges that while *revista* is not politically engaged theater per se, it does take part in significant social critique. It is precisely this feature that for Vieira justifies Vianninha’s choice of using *revista* techniques in his politically engaged theater. The fact that scholars generally consider the highly dramatic *Rasga Coração* to be Vianninha’s masterpiece has made it difficult to look at the role of humor and laughter as an expression of political opposition in his work (290). Writing in 2013, Vieira explained that very few scholars had as yet focused on the comic features of Vianninha’s work, including those who extensively studied his biography and plays such as Maria Sílvia Betti, Carmelinda Guimarães, Leslie Hawkins Damasceno, and Rosângela Patriota (authors whose work forms part of the secondary bibliography of this manuscript). While my work is in direct dialogue with Vieira’s book, my argument is that the turn to popular theater and *cordel*, namely to its humoristic element, characterized the work of several Brazilian playwrights, who formed a generation of leftist

⁴ In the book *Allegro Ma Non Troppo: Ambiguidades do Riso na Dramaturgia de Oduvaldo Vianna Filho* (2013), Thaís Leão Vieira focuses on Vianninha’s comic works. In her analysis of Vianninha’s comedies, Vieira challenges the traditional historiography of Brazilian theater, which does not consider revue or other comedic genres part of the conversation. Vieira clearly tells us that “(...) *A arte teatral que incorpora elementos da estética da revista, da comédia de costumes, pode parecer matéria estranha ao conjunto de sua obra, interpretada à luz de um viés trágico que, no plano do discurso, construiu uma memória histórica pautada em uma obra-prima de caráter dramático escrita por Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, Rasga Coração. Somente a partir de um olhar ampliado sobre a produção desse homem de teatro ativo e inquieto é que se torna compreensível a coerência do riso em sua dramaturgia, que revela, através do cômico, sua expressão de oposição política.*” (290). Vieira also gives a thorough account of the secondary bibliography on the playwright’s work, dividing criticism into four broadly defined moments and connecting them to the sociohistorical context: the first moment corresponds to work that was being produced in the late 1970s under the dictatorial regime (e.g., Carmelinda Guimarães); the second one encompasses authors who emphasized the playwright’s biography and the theatrical conventions developed in the context of the 1980s (e.g., Leslie Damasceno); the third moment corresponds to the research on the playwright’s place in society “*pós-fim das utopias*” [after the end of utopias] and the debate about the relationship between art and politics in the 1990s (e.g., Rosângela Patriota); finally, from 2000 on, criticism about Vianninha has been focused on the theme of the cultural industry (Vieira 299). In addition to establishing this division, which is paramount for our understanding of the relationship between Brazilian theater historiography and criticism, Vieira’s work represents a significant attempt to shed light on the role of humor and laughter in Vianninha’s dramatic production.

theater practitioners that sought to innovate aesthetically while remaining aware of and connected to the genealogy of theater.

Chapter 1

Laughter and Decorum in Portuguese Revue Theater (1930s—1950s)

Those born in Portugal after the end of the dictatorship in 1974 never suffered the direct impact of official censorship, the political police, or fear. Nevertheless, the ruins of the Estado Novo and its violence still surface in the country in intriguing ways. The regime was active in using and strengthening elements of what had already been in place within Portuguese society before the dictatorship, including Roman Catholic notions of morality. António de Oliveira Salazar and, by extension, the institutions of the Estado Novo endorsed a *modus vivendi* incompatible with the “color of laughter.” By reading or listening to Salazar’s speeches, for example, one sees how the dictator encouraged a life of passivity, Catholic appropriateness, sobriety, and conformism. As the “father” and “husband” of the nation, Oliveira’s political and personal choices reveal a *modus vivendi* of darkness, concealment, confinement, and secrecy (Santos 109).

As historians and the Portuguese public slowly acknowledge the legacy of the regime, Portugal continues to experience the “remains” of the dictatorial regime in physical, emotional, and cultural realms as well as in the built environment. For certain people who lived through the dictatorship, the “past life” remains becomes a practice of memory immersed in *saudade* (nostalgia) or critique. Through storytelling, what was once inhabited by bodies—and is now abandoned, restored, or completely disappeared—brings the past into the present. For the generations who were born after the democratization of the country and thus see only the ruins, hear the stories, and imagine the life that preceded the decay, these spaces transcend their materiality and walk into a mythical dimension, a dimension where theatricality still lives.

Throughout history, the Portuguese theatrical establishment was always in crisis—a crisis of dramaturgical consistency, or a crisis due to the lack of means of production and professionalization. The lack of state funds, playwrights, critics, and trained artists resulted in a theater whose history is marked by absences, prejudices, and archival difficulties. Even so, the places that saw theaters flourish—those built and those that became itinerant—were the body and reflection of a perpetual movement in search of dramatic action. One of those places was the Parque Mayer, known as “Portugal’s Broadway.” The Parque was the center of the bohemian life of the city throughout the 20th century. In the aftermath of the Carnation Revolution, it was slowly abandoned to the point where legal disputes transformed it into a mostly empty place, conveniently located for parking in a business district of the city and for eating during lunch breaks. While stories of the Parque Mayer are often contradictory, it has become a mythical space of memory and forgetting. On the one hand, artists, theatergoers, journalists, businessmen, producers, directors, stage designers, cooks, neighbors, and *alfacinhas* (Lisbon locals) who engaged with Parque Mayer activities have attributed an aura of fantasy, laughter, and happiness to the space. On the other hand, skeptical critics (especially theater researchers) tend to erase (or only briefly mention) its prominence in Lisbon’s twentieth-century theatrical and entertainment scene. While I remember going to Parque Mayer in the early 1990s, it was through hearing stories about what it once was and walking in the space that I began translating the past into the present. Through mediated acts of imagination and translation, the streets and theaters have

permeated my understanding of the stories I am now reading and have entered the echoes of laughter I am now trying to hear.⁵

Inaugurated in June of 1922 as “*Avenida Parque*,” the 50,000 m² space of Parque Mayer began as a theatrical hub comprising four theaters — *Teatro Maria Vitória*, *Teatro Variedades*, *Teatro Capitólio*, and *Teatro ABC* — founded in 1922, 1926, 1931, and 1956, respectively. But the area soon became more than that. The restaurants, taverns, coffee shops, *fado* clubs, hair salons, barbershops, circuses, and amusement attractions developed a *scenario* for encounters (H. Ferreira 40-41).⁶ Parque Mayer was a space that not only enhanced the life of the capital with its theaters, cafes, restaurants; it also witnessed encounters between artists and theatergoers at the doors of the theaters and outside the dressing rooms. The multiplicity of attractions captivated a variety of spectators, among whom were artists, politicians, producers, impresarios, and intellectuals. Working-class people also frequented Parque Mayer and its attractions, although for the most part they could not afford to go to the theater (H. Ferreira 40). Eclecticism was a significant characteristic of the space, giving people who did not go to the theaters the opportunity to see and engage with artists in a bohemian scenario.

Parque Mayer was a cultural hub, and it was also located very close to other spaces, such as cabarets, where the desire to be modern was significant. This desire expressed itself not only by embracing references to American or European cities such as New York, Berlin, and Paris but also by experiencing nightlife. Before or after going to Parque Mayer, people often attended venues such as restaurants or those characterized as the *bas-fond* of Lisbon, the *tuga* burlesque, a smaller and “less modern” version of Pigalle’s bohemian life. These various spaces, all geographically close to each other, were profoundly provincial; however, they were also quite subversive given the presence of eroticism, strip tease, and the open possibility of sexual encounters. They also hinted at the “modern life” with their lights, modernist decoration, Paris-like cabarets, and unique aura. Maxime (inspired by Maxim’s de Paris), for example, was a space for the urban bourgeoisie to experience the pleasure that came with leisure and bohemian excesses, and it almost perfectly encapsulates Lisbon’s unique combination of provincialism and *bohème*. As the Portuguese musician Vitorino claims, “It was a naive cabaret, with a rural provincialism and tinges of *revista* and circus.” (Mendonça) Located within two minutes of Parque Mayer, Cabaret Maxime was linked to the experiences of Lisbon’s nightlife.

Among the various attractions of the Parque Mayer was Portuguese revue theater – *teatro de revista*. Central to the life of Parque Mayer, *revista* rapidly became the most popular genre among Portuguese theatergoers (mostly from Lisbon). Different from the popular *Teatro do Povo* promoted by the regime, as well as from independent, college and political theater, *revista* was produced to make people laugh. Nevertheless, for many years, Portuguese theater scholars have defined and depreciated *revista* as “mere entertainment” theater, more aligned with musicals than with literary and academic drama, which they considered more sophisticated.⁷

⁵ In *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), Diana Taylor suggests that Denise Stoklos’s performances demand acts of imagination from us as a way to “imagine our interrelatedness otherwise” (236). As a way to make meaning of Parque Mayer, I affirm the potentiality of Taylor’s ‘act of imagination’ conceptualization.

⁶ I think about this scenario inspired by Taylor, who writes that “by considering scenarios as well as narratives, we expand our ability to rigorously analyze the live and the scripted, the citational practices that characterize both, how traditions get constituted and contested, the various trajectories and influences that might appear in one but not in the other. Scenarios, like other forms of transmission, allow commentators to historicize specific practices.” (33)

⁷ This is also evident in the lack of academic studies about the genre.

Some saw the prolific production of *revistas* and criticized the genre for being overly capitalistic, while others considered that it lacked aesthetic quality and originality.

I once asked my father what he remembered about the space and the theatrical genre before their decay. He said, “Parque Mayer was the only place where we could be ‘free,’ and *revista* was a theatrical experience that allowed us to know what was going on in the country.” Intrigued by that statement, I became more interested in understanding what he meant, and perhaps more importantly, why the regime allowed such a space to exist. Talking to my father and others, I witnessed the nostalgia that Parque Mayer evoked in the same people who now look at its ruins, and I began to realize that its *repertoire* lives on in memory.⁸ As a space-in-between, an interstice and a porosity within the body of the dictatorship, Parque Mayer (and *revista*, in particular) offered an array of entertainment in which laughter and the senses performed a pivotal role.⁹

In this chapter, inspired by the contemporary ruins of Parque Mayer, I begin by studying Portuguese *teatro de revista* during the dictatorship. This study arose from a deep desire to understand the extent to which this type of theater, as enacted theory, used humor and laughter to “see the familiar defamiliarized” (Critchley 10). I quickly realized that in times when censorship and the Catholic apparatus were most repressing the senses, *revista* provided a short and temporary burst that challenged the sensorial model of the Portuguese dictatorship.¹⁰ At times, and although there were constraints related to official censorship, the choreography of laughter found in *revista* attempted to intervene/influence the audience to laugh about the repression under which they were living. At other times, the capitalist enterprise of the activity sacrificed quality in addition to the fact that many humorous scenes worked at the expense of oppressing groups of people such as women. Despite the many contradictions that the genre presents to an untrained eye, I kept delving into the question of the extent to which *revistas*, as live performances and through the “laughing body” of the audience, challenged the model in which Portuguese people lived and organized their senses during the period of the repressive regime. Once live performances, *revistas* now exist as part of an archive. Moreover, *revista*’s prolific repertoire is difficult to access because so little was published. According to Rebello, only two percent of the productions performed onstage between 1851 and 1981 have been published, and “the inexistence of published texts constitutes an almost insurmountable obstacle to writing a history of revue theater that is not limited to lining up titles and dates, names of actors and authors, scenery and entrepreneurs” (*História* 13-14).

Left with archival research, the genre examination requires some preliminary questions to be answered. For example, where is this archive located? How many *revistas* were presented

⁸ In *The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003), Taylor distinguishes the ‘archival memory’ from the ‘repertoire’. The ‘repertoire’, Taylor tells us, “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing – in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge.” (20)

⁹ Cinema production is a pivotal representation of mediated *repertoire*. The film called *Parque Mayer* by António-Pedro Vasconcelos made its première on December 6th, 2018. I aim to watch and analyze it in future work as a means to think about collective memory and revivalism. The film “O Parque das Ilusões” directed by Perdigão Queiroga premiered in 1963. It would be interesting to analyze the two films comparatively under the idea of “Park of Illusions.”

¹⁰ We know that Parque Mayer is strongly linked to the history of *revista* and functioned as the hub and heart of *revista* performances. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that it was not the only space where the genre was presented. Other theaters orbited around that hub, including Teatro Politeama, on Rua das Portas de Santo Antão; Teatro Avenida, located on Avenida da Liberdade itself; Teatro da Trindade, in Chiado, and Teatro Eden, in Praça dos Restauradores, to name but a few.

during the dictatorship, and in which theaters? What criteria should one use to select scripts for research? Should scripts be selected by theme, decade, year, author, composer, or other criteria? My experience is that since we do not find a detailed archival cataloguing of most *revistas*, the archive itself directly influences the criteria. There are thus several methodological challenges, the first being access to the scripts. *Revistas* were produced to be enacted, reviewed, and reused in other shows, not published. However, since they were considered theatrical shows — varietal, lightweight forms of entertainment — official censorship required each script to be sent to the authorities. Ironically, it is what remains in the censorship archive that allows researchers to study these materials. In a nutshell, if *revistas* had not been censored, we would not have access to most of the scripts.

For the purpose of this chapter, the archival work included the consultation of three of the repositories where the official documentation of the SPN/SNI is found: Portuguese Archive Torre do Tombo, where there are 9,225 files of censored plays;¹¹ Biblioteca da Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores [Portuguese Society of Authors Library], temporarily closed due to collection digitization, and Museu Nacional do Teatro [National Theater Museum], where there are some items of interest (namely photographs, posters, playbills, and others). I have specifically consulted “Processos de censura a peças de teatro” [Censorship cases for theater plays]. They are part the archive held by the Torre do Tombo. The archive also includes all the documents made available by Secretariado Nacional de Informação (SNI) [National Secretariat for Information], including those that were under the umbrella of Direcção Geral dos Serviços de Espectáculos (DGE) [General Directorate of Entertainment Services]. Both archives include documents issued between 1929 and 1974 and the scope of DGE includes the following:

Processos de censura a peças de teatro, actas das Sessões da Comissão de Censura, actas das Sessões do Conselho Superior da Inspeção Geral dos Espectáculos, cineclubes, processos de letras de música por autores, processos relativos a máquinas de projecção ou de projectar, sessões privadas, processos relativos à reposição de filmes, filmes reprovados, filmes aprovados com cortes, exame e classificação de filmes de 16 e 35 mm, tradutores de filmes, Teatro do Povo, Fundo do Cinema Nacional, subsídios concedidos e não concedidos a pequenas e grandes metragens, processos de artistas. (*Direcção*)
[Files of censorship of plays, minutes of the Censorship Commission Sessions, minutes of the Superior Council of the General Inspection of the Performances, film clubs, files of lyrics by authors, files regarding projection or projection machines, private sessions, files regarding the replacement of films, disapproved films, approved films with cuts, examination and classification of 16 and 35 mm films, film translators, People’s Theatre, National Cinema Fund, subsidies granted and not granted to small and large films, artists’ files.]

Even though the abundance of materials is certainly a plus for the purposes of this study, there are multiple challenges that come with having access to *revistas* only through the censorship archive. First, several archival files/folders of *revistas* include only *aditamentos* (text additions/extensions) or do not have the complete version of the original *revista*. In many cases, it is difficult to know which versions correspond to the original. The question for the researcher then becomes which text/version to analyze and where to start. Second, there are several censorship annotations. Some *revistas* simply have cuts and/or an annotation made by the censor on the first

¹¹ It is important to note that the 9,225 censored plays include all the plays written, produced, and scrutinized by the censorship apparatus.

page. Others have more detailed information provided by the Comissão de Censura [Censorship Commission], particularly from the 1940s on, including the play's title, number of acts, *quadros* (scenes), registration number, summary of the action, literary value, dramatic value, moral value, repercussion on the public and proposed decision. Even if a team of researchers listed all the *revistas* among the over 9,000 processes, one would still not know which were performed, where, and how many times. We would have to cross that information with the archives of the theaters (which, for the most part, are not open to the public). Therefore, unless we work in a team to do an inventory of the existent *revistas* in the archive, digitize and organize them, the study of the genre will remain somewhat circumscribed.

These challenges did not discourage me from writing this chapter; rather, they served as catalysts for me to pursue my study of *revistas*. I used several strategies to narrow the period under study, for example, first by choosing an artist – Hermínia Silva – who accompanied the development of the genre during the dictatorial regime, and second by analyzing primarily those scripts in which she participated, and which include letters or reports from the Censorship Commission. By focusing only on the *revistas* in which H. Silva participated, I was forced to exclude *revistas* that might bring in other useful information. Nevertheless, the selected works shed light on what I hope to be a much larger project on Portuguese revue theater during the dictatorship.

Throughout the chapter, I develop my argument that we cannot understand the development of Portuguese modern theater without understanding *Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa* and its relation to laughter. Moreover, I hope to show the reader that *revista* did not only offer escapist “entertainment” but also used humor and laughter to mock aspects of the dictatorship. In the first section, I begin by looking at the sensorial model of the Portuguese dictatorship, which was challenged by the revue performances and, largely, by the prolific activities of Parque Mayer – the spatial and architectural scenario that, as we have seen, not only persisted throughout the regime, but also became the most iconic space for *revista* performances. In the second section, I reflect on *revista* as a genre through its relation to laughter. In the third and final section of the chapter, I delve into twelve out of the thirty *revistas* in which the actor/singer/*vedette* H. Silva participated — *Pistarim* (1933) *Arre Burro* (1936), *Chuva de Mulheres* (1937), *Sempre em Pé* (1938) *Bolacha Americana* (1945), *Ai Bate, Bate* (1948), *Ora Agora Viras Tu* (1949), *Lisboa Antiga* (1953), *Eva no Paraíso* (1953, 1957) *Já Vais Ai* (1956), *Daqui fala o Zé* (1956), and *Casa da Sorte* (1957). The date range of the selected *revistas* – 1930s-1950s – represents a very prolific period for the genre in Portugal. Looking at particular sketches, I show how *revistas* as a genre were part entertainment to distract and oppress people and part resistance to the repressive aspects of the dictatorial regime. Thus, I look at the possibility of “dictatorial laughter” — i.e., of laughter (and humor) used to alienate and control the masses in the genre — as a counterpoint to the idea that *revista* always used laughter to alleviate repression. I also attempt to unravel the possibility of a “hidden script” – i.e., scenes in which the regime was questioned despite the official censorship apparatus. With this analysis, I hope to contribute to the critique of *revista* by pointing out the ambiguities and complexities that the genre comprises in its relationship with the official censorship apparatus.

Sensorial Model of the Portuguese Dictatorship

Along with political repression, censorship, fear, concealment, traditional family morality, and the valorization of poverty and humility (in a somewhat Franciscan way), the *Estado Novo* masked the social reality that it wanted to control. Women and children remained

under the father's supervision; women could not leave the country without their husband's permission. Sexuality was considered primarily for reproduction (and therefore under reproductive labor exploitation), fashion was very conservative, and men and women (regardless of their place on the ideological spectrum) were born, raised, and made to live under the repression of their bodies and senses. By using technologies of repression, the state was able to "penetrate the souls avoiding the bodies" (Santos 331) and through prevention to suffocate potential conflicts before they could emerge (331). Media censorship and isolation, for example, resulted in the fact that people lacked consciousness of the contours of their lives under the dictatorship. While most people did not know that a democratic government constituted an alternative, there was political dissidence working underground (namely organized by the Portuguese Communist Party). Moreover, women who were involved in the underground resistance were particularly aware that the state was repressing the body at all levels (including the sexual level).¹²

The state's vigilance and control shaped the Portuguese sensorial model. In a society with high levels of illiteracy, people were obliged to listen—to their boss, husband, priest, and especially to Salazar, the "father of the nation." The workplace, the neighborhood, the church, the radio, and later on, television, were "vehicles of transmission," and their authority went typically unchallenged.¹³ Sight was confined to the spaces inhabited by people who rarely traveled; black and white television appeared in Portugal in 1956, and even then only a few people had it at home; with time, cafeterias and *tascas* (dive bars) started to have televisions so people in the country could see the national broadcasts. In addition, the metaphorical absence of light — referred to in Portuguese historiography as a period of darkness and grief — shows the extent to which sight was asphyxiated (Santos 338). Taste was confined to Portuguese cuisine (and wine), and recipes were based on poverty and scarcity, especially in countryside regions such as the Alentejo.¹⁴ The sense of smell, I would argue, was primarily shaped by food. Tactile sense, though necessarily present between bodies and external environments, was not as developed, especially within the affective or sexual realms; this lack became, in some cases, a way to punish or threaten physically, particularly in the context of domestic violence (which appears in some *revistas*). In short, the senses of Portuguese citizens were deliberately shaped as a way to control the population and bend it to the will of the Catholic, conservative regime.

An example of this "way of sensing" (to borrow Constance Classen's expression) can be found in several *fado* songs such as "Cheira a Lisboa" [Smells like Lisbon] or "Uma Casa Portuguesa" [A Portuguese House]. The latter is a poem written by Reinaldo Ferreira and Vasco Matos Sequeira, composed by Artur Fonseca that describes the features of the Portuguese house, and was immortalized in the first recorded interpretation by the *fadista* Amália Rodrigues in 1957. It introduced unofficial national symbols and, with time, became a musical emblem of the regime's propaganda in Portugal and abroad. Through the sensorium, the poem's house — "uma casa portuguesa, com certeza!" [a Portuguese house, for sure!] — is culturally meaningful in terms of olfactory and gustatory references. The taste of "pão e vinho sobre a mesa," [bread and

¹² For more material related to vigilance and control, see the documentary "48" by Susana de Sousa Dias (2009).

¹³ Despite the media censorship, humor in radio introduced social critique to the audience. A few examples are "As Lições do Tonecas" (1934), "A Voz dos Ridículos" (1945) and "Os Parodiantes de Lisboa" (1947). The latter was a pivotal example of humorous radio broadcasts during the dictatorship. Future work on comparing radio and *Revista* might be interesting.

¹⁴ A region of poverty, it became the place where the Communist Party organized against the dictatorship and the colonial presence of Portugal in Africa.

wine on the table] the smell in “um cheirinho a alecrim, / um cacho de uvas doiradas, / duas rosas num jardim,” [a whiff of rosemary, / a bunch of golden grapes, / two roses in a garden] and in “E um caldo verde, verdinho / A fumegar na janela.” [And a green, green broth / Steaming in the window]. The song’s significance also originates from visual, auditory, and tactile references, as in a modest house where “E se à porta humildemente bate alguém, / Senta-se à mesa co’a gente” [And if someone knocks humbly at the door, / Sits at the table with us] and “Um São José de azulejo, / Mais o sol da primavera... / Uma promessa de beijos... / dois *braços à minha espera*.” [A tiled St. Joseph, / Plus the spring sun... / A promise of kisses... / two arms waiting for me.] With time, this song “acquired national significance through a more informal process, politically-encoded and widely-shared sensory symbols,” and was extremely effective “at inducing citizens to adhere to a national ideal, and even risk their lives in its defense, as any amount of ‘rational’ discourse” (Classen 73). The poem/song is a *fado*, which is significant.¹⁵ As a type of music widely associated with the regime, the musical genre consistently included topics such as destiny, love, *saudade*, separation, fatalism, suffering, Lisbon and its neighborhoods, and religious devotion. But it is also significant that the poem was sung by Amália Rodrigues, the most famous and popular *fadista* of the regime. Finally, it is crucial to remember that a key message in this *fado* is the praise of poverty and humility as an ideal:

Numa casa portuguesa fica bem,
 Pão e vinho sobre a mesa.
 E se à porta humildemente bate alguém,
 Senta-se à mesa co’a gente.
 Fica bem esta franqueza, fica bem,
 Que o povo nunca desmente.
 A alegria da pobreza
 Está nesta grande riqueza
 De dar, e ficar contente. (Ferreira)
 [In a Portuguese home it looks good,
 Bread and wine on the table.
 And if someone knocks humbly at the door,
 He sits at the table with us.
 This frankness is good, it’s good,
 That the people never deny.
 The joy of poverty
 Is in this great wealth
 Of giving, and being content.]

This is significant, since this *fado* arguably encompasses the sensorial model of the Portuguese dictatorship in its overarching components, while it evokes the nationalism, passivity, and traditionalism of the regime — all in the voice of the most iconic cultural figure of the time — Amália.

For the most part, there were very few public places where Portuguese bodies performed a different sensorial model than the one described. Parque Mayer was one of them.¹⁶ It offered a

¹⁵ *Fado* was also the song by excellence of *revista*.

¹⁶ Even though *revista* was performed in theaters outside of Parque Mayer, my analysis mainly focuses on this space. I consider Parque Mayer to offer a degree of specificity when it comes to explaining the exploration of alternative sensorial knowledge, namely because of all the other attractions it provided. Further research would include thinking about Parque through Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopia.

creative and vivid scenario for sensorial experiences, not only through the embodied and performed acts of *revista* but also through food, music, encounters, boxing, and other attractions.¹⁷ Working in tandem, the recreational scenario was a way to escape repression, while *revista* was a door for the spectator to walk through into an explosion of color, humor, and dance. In *revista*, the audience was attracted by the possibility of a fantasy world where the imagination, flesh, sexuality, music, and collective laughter were “real.” However, those elements coexisted with the Estado Novo sensorial model, which was “a product of con-sensus — that is, of sensing along with others” (Howes 9). As stated by Santos, *revista* was a genre that endured between submission and resistance (291), and the sensorial unities put to work by performative elements on stage were significant as a form of resistance, allowing for a unique and ambiguous flow of the sensorium.

When thinking about the “flow” of the senses, I recall the idea developed by Classen and François Laplantine that the study of intracultural diversity is important for the “sensory turn” (10), encouraging us to consider new ways of perceiving and relating to the world that interrelates all the senses as a “means of perception” (14). This study also invites us to perceive the world not only through the senses of sight and sound, but also through those that “are not generally considered to provide ‘ways of wisdom’, but rather, only channels for pleasure or displeasure” (Classen 271)—senses such as smell, taste, and touch. Thus, an intersensory approach challenges us to look at the concatenation of the senses as an alternative to the ‘con-sensus’ of separate and disciplined sensorial models. In the context of Portuguese dictatorial regime, such an approach includes acknowledging the existence of different and alternative sensorial modes to Salazar’s. If the latter intended to create a docile citizenry, *revista* created an ideologically discordant one. Although the genre was not immune to censorship, its use of humor was pivotal as a nonviolent way to challenge the authoritarian regime and the model in which Portuguese people lived and organized the senses.

While within humor studies the debate over humor’s subversive potential persists, the literature about *revista* is unanimous in its finding that the theatrical genre was, at times, a form of dissidence—at least as far as concerns the notion of resisting censorship through humor. *Revista* was thus an affective expression that challenged the sobriety and seriousness of the dictatorship. This was significant, as it meant that the fundamentals of the regime were being undermined. The theatrical experience offered an intersensory and performative experience, one that could “move an audience to emotion, to thought, even (on rare occasions) to action” (Campbell 1). On the one hand, the performances embodied humor, music, color, “inappropriate” language, sexuality, dance, light, and improvisation.¹⁸ Seriousness and sobriety could be challenged and, as a consequence, the spectator gained “awareness of their own embodiedness (...) and the affective, or experiential, aspect of performance [grew] in importance.” (14). On the other hand, collective laughter eventually became a unifying, contagious, communal, visceral, and cathartic affective embodiment. As a convergence of the senses, including the sense of humor, laughter arose from political satire and social parody, liberating, relieving, giving pleasure and, at the same time, overriding fear (H. Ferreira 51).

¹⁷ Here, I evoke Diana Taylor’s concept of *scenario*, implicating myself in the process of recognizing “the many ways in which the archive and the repertoire work to constitute and transmit social knowledge.” (33)

¹⁸ Color, for example, plays a critical role in our perception. According to Kato, the experience of color is more than Walter Benjamin’s approach of a “living thing.” For Kato, the transgressive nature of color is its “cross-media,” since “color experience infiltrates the boundaries of all fields of life that bridge the gap between perception and action, (...) [and, as media] affiliates with various senses at once.” (Kato 70)

Consequently, from the moment that people entered Parque Mayer to the moment they left, the senses at work unfolded different subjectivities from those in other public and domestic spaces. While Parque Mayer evoked a new intersensory knowledge open to all, *revista* brought humor to the stage as a shared and opaque choreography of laughter performed in the topography of the censor's blue pencil ("lápiz azul"). For that reason, I consider it essential to highlight and study *Revista à Portuguesa* in its relation to laughter.

***Revista à Portuguesa* and Laughter**

Initially inspired by the French *Revue de Fin d'Année* and by Italian actors of the eighteenth century, *revista* appeared in Portugal in the 1850s and focused on the idiosyncrasies of the social, institutional, and political life of the country. The genealogy of the genre goes back to Aristophanes and Molière, and, in the Portuguese context, presents reminiscences of the satirical tone of the early modern playwright Gil Vicente and the comic operettas of the eighteenth-century dramatist Da Silva. The combination of the performative elements with representation and humor developed into a unique theatrical genre through which one can analyze the life of Portugal's capital during much of the twentieth century, accessing that "reviewed past." *Revista* evolved throughout the decades, having its most popular époque during the dictatorship. Accordingly, its unfolding was also the evolution of the regime itself, which might explain its decay a few decades after the revolution ended dictatorial rule.¹⁹ Like Salazar, and to borrow the expression of historian Fernando Rosas, *revista* embraced "the art of knowing how to endure" (*a arte de saber durar*). When one considers the temporality of the regime and of *revista*), however, it becomes clear that its evolution was neither monolithic nor linear. For this reason, it makes sense to think of the period between 1926 and 1974 not only as what became known as the "second phase" of the genre in Portugal, but also as a period of advances and setbacks, of stagnation and impulses, where reviewing contemporary life became synonymous with understanding its contradictions. What, after all, is distinct about *revista*? One aspect upon which the critics agree is that there is a "Portuguese" version of the genre. A transnational reading of the genre would perhaps challenge this nationalist approach; however, looking at the way in which the "formula" was used, reused, and repeated, sometimes, to exhaustion, helps one to identify some of the idiosyncrasies found in the so-called "Portuguese version" – *Revista à Portuguesa*.

The "formula" of *Revista à Portuguesa*, or the most common structure of the genre, comprised a fusion of various performative elements that included text, music, choreography, scenography, and eccentric costumes. Moreover, through humor, parody, satire, and pastiche, the content mirrored the nation's political scene and, at times, presented a critique of it (I. M. Costa 28). The scripts were fragmented and often offered numbers and acts that did not form a cohesive narrative but a pastiche of sketches, connected by music and certain numbers, somewhat like a variety show. Choreography, initially performed by women called *coristas* or "chorus girls" who danced semi-naked (Santos 287), eventually included men and transformed into *dança do fado* (*fado* dance) (I. M. Costa 29). Scenography and costumes brought an explosion of light and color, composing grandiose scenic spaces (30). The scripts/narratives were usually written collectively and used humor to allude to the political and daily life of the country. The characters were typically influenced by traditional archetypes found in Portuguese folklore and regionalism (Santos 287). Although *revista* should not be confused with the genre of the

¹⁹ In a country where freedom of speech was not politically repressed anymore, *revista* was no longer a theatrical experience of escaping censorship.

musical, it integrated music in a very appealing and provocative way. Most productions presented original music inspired by Portuguese musical traditions such as *fado* and rural songs, which eventually developed a new genre that became known as *canção revisteira*, or “*revista* song” (I. M. Costa 40). Others were influenced by foreign rhythms and styles such as fandango, rumba, samba, foxtrot, swing/jazz, and the Charleston (40). In addition to scenography, choreography, music, and the text, the role of the actors (namely the ones that performed the *compère* and the *vedette*) was far-reaching, not only because of the embodiment of the mentioned elements but also because through these elements, actors could improvise and to some extent escape the censorship apparatus of the dictatorship.²⁰

The social context of the regime was not oblivious to modernization. Bourgeois elites experienced urban living, searching for modernity and cosmopolitanism and, consequently, overlooking holding prejudice against what they perceived as “popular” theater. The division between traditional and modern was particularly prevalent in Lisbon. This city wanted to assert itself as a cosmopolitan and “futuristic” capital, even if most Europeans still considered it to be “provincial” when compared with Paris or London. In the theatrical sphere, all participants were simultaneously the observer and the observed, constantly undertaking reflections and reaffirming the division, difference, and hierarchy of genres. Theater practitioners and theatergoers seemed to be somewhat comfortable with the existing distinction between “serious” and light theater (a category that included *revista*). Such a distinction guided people towards their “proper places,” which mirrored the same type of order imposed by the regime. On the one hand, the light theater was felt to be popular, smaller, and *brejeiro* (vulgar), and therefore something to be consumed by Lisbon’s petty bourgeoisie. “Serious theater” (*teatro declamado*), on the other hand, belonged to those whose “pedigree” and access to education allowed them to attend the so-called great theaters of the capital, which were nonetheless far behind other theatrical spaces in Southern Europe before two world wars and fascism interrupted their development.

Critics appear to agree why “light” theater, namely *revista*, was considered of lesser quality. One of the reasons is the connection one can establish between *revisteiro* (author of *revistas* or scriptwriter) and journalist, rather than playwright. This tendency is partly related to the classic and structural division between theater as a spectacle and theater as literature, the latter being associated with “seriousness” and the former with entertainment. By reviewing and describing the most recent events, a *revisteiro* performed a role comparable to that of a journalist. Similar to media, *revistas* did not escape censorship. However, the fact that they presented a humoristic tone to the content offered the possibility of shining a light on forbidden subjects under the premise that these subjects were “fiction.” In a nutshell, by entertaining the audiences with the latest news within a humoristic framework, the general consensus was that *revista* was not deep or sophisticated enough to be taken seriously; however, it nonetheless successfully offered an alternative way to present a somewhat critical view of what was happening at the time. Another reason for the categorization of the genre as “light” was its commercial dimension. The development and maintenance of *revista* productions were directly linked to the capitalistic activity of entrepreneurs. The primary aim was to sell, entertain, and amuse the audience. There were two main types of impresarios. One type was comprised of speculators who were primarily concerned with the sustainability of the theatrical spectacle, even when this compromised the creative performance or freedom of expression (which was already

²⁰ *Compère* is the character that comments the various acts (*quadros*) of a *revista*. It is an essential figure to set the rhythm of the play. *Vedette* is the protagonist of the play and typically the leading star on stage that the audience wants to see performing (I. M. Costa 60-1).

conditioned by self-censorship and the technologies of censorship imposed by the regime). Another type of entrepreneur was comprised of those who tried to combine their enterprise's artistic and business goals. While it is fair to recognize that the profitability of show business (including merchandising) and the relation with periodicals, literary or not, was indisputably essential for the durability of the genre in Portugal, such endeavors compromised the quality of some of the *revistas*.

Because the production of *revistas* between 1926-1974 mirrors the sociopolitical contours of Portuguese society and of Lisbon in particular, *revistas* deal with many themes. Despite censorship and commercial, even formulaic, constraints, there was some thematic variety throughout the decades. Most of *revistas* included acts that mentioned gastronomy, technology, sports, Salazar, gender roles, gambling, social problems, Portuguese rurality, religiosity, and Catholic morality. In addition to these themes, *revistas* often created a humoristic tone through erotic and sexual innuendos. Moreover, the city of Lisbon appeared in *revistas* as a privileged scenario of most scenes.

There was a special relation between the *revista* audience and Lisbon, and this was a common theme. Studying the city from the *revista* point of view could provide one with an exciting and original examination of the capital. The study of Lisbon through the lens of *revisteiros* could undoubtedly guide one through an archeology of knowledge whereby one could access both the said and the unsaid. In a sort of alternative triad to the Three Fs (*Fado, Futebol e Fátima* [Fado, Football and Fátima]) — this already a reworking of the Salazarist trinity of *Deus, Pátria e Família* [God, Homeland and Family]), I suggest the triad “Lisbon, Fado, and *Revista*” to refer to the dictatorship. Like a kaleidoscope, these elements reflected each other, and the more one rotates them, the more connected patterns emerge. They each could not exist without the other, and the public, most of whom were migrants, illiterates, and observers, could not socially “exist” either. It was the modern Lisbon promised by the provinces, and it was both *with* and *in* the city that the audience laughed—nervously, irregularly, and arrhythmically.

The purpose of *revista* was, indeed, to make people laugh. Perhaps this laugh was one of relief, in the Freudian sense, a laugh aimed at the frenzied madness of a country that projected itself externally, politically, and economically through the maintenance of colonies, yet which internally did not guarantee human rights to most of its population. It was, in fact, a laugh that was heard *in* and *beyond* the theater — in the streets, alleys, cafes, restaurants, and other spaces such as Parque Mayer. This laughter soothed the petty bourgeoisie who attended the shows. It made the theatergoers feel “free,” even though such freedom was lived within a capitalistic and oppressive framework. The actors and the spectators were simultaneously observers and observed and the audience's laughter was a kind of mirror of the laughter that took place on stage. It was a made-up laugh, a laugh whose temporality was ephemeral and restricted to the time and space of the show.

The fact that the popularity of *Teatro de Revista* in Lisbon was directly connected to its capitalist forces became a challenge for several leftist artists who wanted to create and communicate independently in the theatrical space. This became clear when the global political climate of the 1960s demanded new forms of artistic production. By then, aesthetics in Portugal started to become ultra-political, and the creation of new theatrical venues and companies reflected the expansion of Brechtian formulations, as well as the arrival of vanguard and independent theaters. Additionally, most of these practitioners thought that *revista* performances had become uninteresting, commodified, and rough adaptations of French, British, and Spanish

productions (Porto 30).²¹ Some of them were so frustrated and troubled by the theater scene of the country that they worked for the creation of new spaces as alternative arenas for the theater to flourish without the intervention of an impresario. Nevertheless, because of regime constraints, these projects only thrived in the aftermath of the Carnation Revolution.²² Despite the critical voices, a more mainstream version of *revista* continued to be produced past the dictatorial regime – both as a genre and a source of inspiration for a wide range of practitioners, namely on TV.

Moreover, the relation between laughter and theater during the regime was not reserved exclusively for *revista*. António Ferro, the person most responsible for Portuguese cultural policy during the Estado Novo, deployed, along with censorship, initiatives that made it difficult for playwrights unwilling to work with the regime. One of these initiatives involved the creation of state-subsidized theater such as the *Teatro do Povo* (People’s Theater), whose objective was to take national theater production on the road to various parts of the country, places where most inhabitants had never seen a play. The production, primarily of comic-humorous content, was in line with the regime’s values and, despite being later replaced by other projects, undoubtedly left a mark on the national memory. This leads to a key question, namely, if *Teatro do Povo* and theatrical projects such as the *Comediantes de Lisboa* or radio programs such as the *Parodiantes de Lisboa* were also able to foresee the laughter of the Portuguese public, can one consider the laughter evoked by *revista* to be different and distinctive? To answer this question, it is necessary to carry out a thorough examination, that is, to “review” what the *revista* archive offers.

Between Dictatorial Laughter and a Hidden Script

Between 1946 and 1948, the magazine *Mundo Literário* published 53 issues under the direction of Jaime Cortesão and the magazine’s editor, Luís de Sousa Rebelo. Through the

²¹ Contrary to the opinions of those who have researched Parque Mayer and present a celebratory reading of the space and of the *revista*, the well-known theater critic Carlos Porto is harsh when scrutinizing the genre before the 1970s. Porto acknowledges, however, that it is crucial to analyze *revista* because it was the genre that attracted bigger audiences (especially if we remember that there were four theaters in Parque Mayer that lasted several decades). According to Porto, *revista* production in the 1970s instigated new scenic languages, particularly in Teatro ABC, where music, scenography, direction, cast, and wardrobe allowed the audience to establish new performance paradigms and brought “quality” to the productions.

²² Rejecting the idea that *revista* was a “lower” genre, a group of people who had worked in Parque Mayer (and other venues where *revista* had been produced) longed for a non-commercial company (Reis 11). In 1974, former artists Francisco Nicholson and Mário Alberto along with other actors and dancers, created a theater workers collective named *Teatro Ádóque* that lasted until July of 1982 in the Lisbon neighborhood Martim Moniz. According to Luciano Reis, some of the performances produced were pedagogical, sophisticated, humoristic, and critical without being vulgar or “trashy.” Laughter could, indeed, constitute a “popular weapon” (20). The collective also produced radio broadcasts, discography, and children’s performances that were “unforgettable.” (84) Contrary to other companies (namely, Parque Mayer theaters), the collective was overtly interested in left-wing political projects, with no ambiguities or commodification (Porto 80). The open positions embodied, once again, the political momentum that Portugal experienced after the revolution. According to Porto, in addition to the political aspects that *revistas* like *A Paródia* [The Parody] expressed, artists were able to articulate creativity and new aesthetics and sensorial models. By means of refusing what they considered “fake” in other performances (such as the stardom of the actors or excessive props) (82), the collective created a combination of a critical poetics that looked at social transformation with performatic elements (music, scenography, dance, and acting) that were generative of an alternative sensorial model. As an isolated project that combined those elements in the theater scene of the 1980s, *Ádóque*’s approach was mainly possible because the country was no longer living under the dictatorship. However, the work of the collective was promising in its recognition of *revista* as a theatrical genre that could make people think, laugh, and feel through their bodies and senses.

engagement of several intellectuals (including authors such as Jorge de Sena and Adolfo de Casais Monteiro), *Mundo Literário* aimed to provide readers with a space for artistic critique:

Propomo-nos uma difícil empreza: ser, entre a arte, a ciência e a literatura de um lado, e do outro o público, o terreno comum em que aquelas não se vejam apoucadas, e este não sinta o mal estar de quem só ouve falar à sua volta uma língua estranha. A língua é a mesma – e é importante saber-se que os problemas de quem escreve são os mesmos que os do leitor. (Rebello 1)

[We have set ourselves a difficult task: to be, between art, science and literature on one side, and the public on the other, the common ground in which the former are not seen to be impoverished, and the latter does not feel the uneasiness of someone who only hears a strange language being spoken around him. The language is the same - and it is important to know that the problems of the writer are the same as those of the reader.]

The editors desired to introduce and critique “as mais nobres actividades do espírito” [the noblest activities of the spirit], making use of language accessible to all readers, aiming at becoming a bridge between readers and figures such as Pablo Picasso, José Maria Eça de Queirós, or Freud (featured in the first number of the literary magazine). One of the sections was dedicated to theater and signed by the artist and theater critic António Pedro. In the magazine’s fifth issue, published on 8 June 1946, Pedro wrote a theater column titled, “Quase Elogio da Revista” [Quasi-Praise of *Revista*]. The author explains why he cannot offer a full praise of *revista*—not because of defects in the genre *per se* but because of those who produced/wrote some of them. According to Pedro, *revista* was still a good theatrical experience, even when only a few acts presented quality. The critic was responding to those who made the distinction between popular/light (*ligeiro*) and serious theater, showing prejudice against the former:

(...) entre as muitas trapalhadas correntes em Portugal, entre estas nossas muitas trapalhadas assentes a que poderíamos chamar <<confusões de juízo>>, está em lugar importante a destriça misteriosa entre o que chamam teatro *sério* e o que chamam teatro *ligeiro*. (Ligeiro porque é pé-leve ou porque corre mais apressado?) (...) deixemo-nos de preconceitos burros. Teatro é bom e mau como tudo que há pode ser, mas, bom ou mau, é de uma espécie só: aquela vida inventada, como a de toda a obra de arte, capaz de erguer-se sozinha na convenção do cenário para fazer rir, chorar, vibrar o coração do homem que precisa tanto de imagens como de pão. Pode ir-se mesmo mais longe. Teatro é tragédia e farça. (Pedro 15)

[...] among the many misunderstandings that are current in Portugal, among these many misunderstandings of ours that we might call «confusions of judgment», in an important place is the mysterious distinction between what they call serious theater and what they call light theater. (Light because it is light-footed or because it runs more quickly?) (...) let’s stop being stupidly prejudiced. Theater is good and bad as anything can be, but, good or bad, it is of a single kind: that invented life, like any work of art, capable of rising alone in the convention of the stage to make men laugh, cry, and stir their hearts that need images as much as bread. One can go even further. Theater is tragedy and farce.]

In addition to the opinion that it was not the genre that determines the quality, Pedro highlights one aspect that *revistas* often presented – the quality of the actors: “...todos os melhores actores portugueses, que não foram para a revista por acaso mas que são, como é natural, chamados pela

vocação histrionica aos únicos palcos onde realmente se representa para um público real” [... all the best Portuguese actors, who didn’t go to the *revista* by chance but are, of course, called by their histrionic vocation to the only stages where they really perform for a real audience] (15).

One of the actors to whom Pedro wishes to call attention is H. Silva, “a melhor atriz portuguesa do meu conhecimento” [the best Portuguese actress I know] (15).²³ Pedro spotlights the quality of her communication skills, personality, talent to provoke laughter even when the text is not that good, intuition, and experience — despite her not having taken formal acting classes:

Que personalidade e que talento são necessários para fazer rir de uma maneira tão sóbria e tão perfeita com um texto tão fraco e um motivo tão gasto! Vive-se por momentos de ilusão de que estamos realmente no teatro. Sirva esta crónica de agradecimento pela alegria que isso me deu depois dos desgostos dos últimos tempos...Onde está aí o Gil Vicente que escreva para Hermínia Silva uma rábula popular de nunca mais esquecer? (15)

[What personality and what talent it takes to make people laugh so soberly and so perfectly with such a weak text and such a worn-out motif! One lives for moments with the illusion that one is really in the theater. May this chronicle serve as thanks for the joy it has given me after all the recent sorrows.... Where is the Gil Vicente who might write a popular piece for Hermínia Silva that might stand the test of time?]

What Pedro wishes to express here is that even though there is prejudice against *revista* as a genre, emphasizing lack of quality in many of the shows produced at the time, *revista* was the closest thing to theatrical production then occurring in Portugal. Such a reality was deemed possible due to the prolific work and talent of certain actors, including H. Silva²⁴.

Following Pedro’s reference, I selected twelve scripts out of the thirty *revistas* in which H. Silva had participated.²⁵ In the early stages of my research, I intended to follow H. Silva’s artistic activity due to her practice as a comedian, especially considering the underrepresentation of women in the history of Portuguese humor. Additionally, her career traversed all the decades of the Portuguese dictatorship (particularly in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s) and revealed remarkable plasticity, grace, and wit. However, as I read and delved into the archive, I realized

²³ Hermínia Silva (1907-1993) was born in Lisbon and began her artistic life at an early age. In the late 1920s, the artist had become an established *fado* singer in Parque Mayer, and in the 1930s and 1940s, she was the most important *fado* singer in vaudeville theatre. H. Silva combined her talent as a singer with her comedic nature. Soon the artist represented several roles in Portuguese films, famously co-starring with actors such as Beatriz Costa and António Silva. She was one of the women who had the most impact on *fado* and Portuguese cinema, though not exclusively. H. Silva — “Dona Hermínia” — as several of her colleagues called her, is unquestionably associated with *revista* — a genre in which, as we have seen, performance and singing merge and where the symbiosis between dance and cross-dressing, between words and laughter, is materialized. Her participation in *revistas* was steady and habitual, particularly between 1932 and 1958. In 1958, H. Silva opened her own *fado* house in Lisbon — *Solar da Hermínia* — where she performed regularly until it closed in 1982.

²⁴H. Silva participated in thirty-seven *revistas* and eleven operettas. She also acted and sang in six films. Moreover, from cross-dressing to performing comic versions of Amália’s *fados* or mocking versions of Anglophone pop songs, H. Silva used humor as one of her primary modes of communication. Her work on stage ranged from occasional performances at Teatro Éden and Teatro da Trindade to a significant presence at Teatro Variedades, Teatro ABC, Teatro Avenida, and Teatro Politeama.

²⁵The twelve selected *revistas* are: *Pistarim* (1933) *Arre Burro* (1936), *Chuva de Mulheres* (1937), *Sempre em Pé* (1938) *Bolacha Americana* (1945), *Ai Bate, Bate* (1948), *Ora Agora Viras Tu* (1949), *Lisboa Antiga* (1953), *Eva no Paraíso* (1953, 1957) *Já Vais Aí* (1956), *Daqui fala o Zé* (1956), and *Casa da Sorte* (1957).

that my approach came with a significant challenge. Besides the fact that not all *revistas* are available in the censorship archive, the available ones do not include any information regarding the specific characters/songs or any other kind of participation performed by the artist.²⁶ This fact compromised the original idea because without that information and considering the structure of *revistas* (fragmentary with no plot), I could no longer focus on H. Silva's participation without engaging in a type of research that the scope of this dissertation could not encompass. Since I had gathered, read, and worked on the twelve scripts mentioned above, I decided to pursue the analysis of those scripts without emphasizing H. Silva's participation. Rather than an active "object" of study, she became more of a guiding spirit, an "absent presence" whose career path indelibly marked the theatrical scene in Portugal.

After I realized that researching the participation of actors, vedettes, and other practitioners was a challenge on its own, I comprehended that one of my analytical criteria could not be authorship either. The study of the scripts questioned my conception of dramatic authorship. *Revistas* were typically co-authored, and while there are specific authors who consistently worked together (such as Lourenço Rodrigues, Xavier Magalhães e Fernando Santos, known as "Três Abexins"), they often worked in different configurations. In addition to the authors (writers), composers added grace, rhythm, surprise, and, invariably, comic hints to the text. They married the melody to the dance movements, which granted the connection between the dialogue and the musical numbers/acts. There was space for creative and collaborative work between the authors and the composers, despite often being compromised by the impresario and the censor. The impresario — a businessman— undertook the necessary bureaucratic diligence, formed companies and dealt with the financial issues of producing a show. As an intermediary, the impresario had a mediating role between the artists and the show business world. Thus, they were figures that acted like editors who first and foremost knew and competed with other entrepreneurs. As for the censors, they had the power to read, stamp, cut, and modify every single word of the script and/or the performative elements. Thus, one can say that each *revista* is a kind of open text. Its fragmented structure probably helped the creative process. However, how does one address the question of authorship? In other words, who are the authors of *revistas*? Those who write the dialogue or those who compose the musical numbers? The actors who performed them and, through improvisation, escaped censorship? Or the censors who cut/added as editors?

I suggest that authorship in *revistas* is based on the circularity of voices in which authors, composers, actors, theater professionals, and censors participated. The authors wrote what the composers set to formulate; this in turn was censored by the censors and constrained by the market demands, forcing the authors to rewrite the texts so that the cycle began again and continued until the censorship commission finally approved it. After the cuts, actors would often improvise or change the script back to the pre-censored text during the performing acts. Adding to the circularity of this co-authorship was the constellation of professionals who contributed to choosing costumes, make-up, and choreographies, as well as men and women who inhabited the theaters in informal ways, making them their home. All these inhabitants of the theater created memories, shared stories, and constitute a legacy that an oral history project could register. Such a legacy would possibly introduce one to experiences of sexism, classism, racism, and other types of oppression. Nonetheless, when one reads about or hears testimonies on the theatrical

²⁶ I imagine that this type of information requires extensive research based on several archives, some of them not accessible at the moment (such as the one stored in *Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores* [Portuguese Society for Authors]).

experience of *revista*, there is often a sense of belonging to the theatrical space-time. Similarly, the audience played a crucial role in this circularity of voices. Through their attendance, laughter, and applause, the public mirrored the reality that *revistas* portrayed in the already mentioned dynamic between observers and observed. Thus, the experience of attending a *revista*, particularly in Parque Mayer, offered a sense of belonging to a Lisbon that projected itself as cosmopolitan, fun, and daring — inspired by modern Paris, Lapa *carioca*, and jazz-age America.

As I delved into the archival absences, the circularity of voices, and the time-space portrayed in each script, I could no longer but look at the world of thematic, temporal, stylistic, archival, and ideological ambiguity of *revistas* in their censored-script version. After reading the twelve censored scripts, two things became evident. First, most *revistas* followed a formulaic structure. Second, the fragmentary nature of the genre allowed an oscillation (most often within a single *revista*) between approaches that sometimes aligned with the regime's precepts and sometimes criticized it. Both aspects showed me that a close reading of each *revista* would not work out, since the result would be an enumeration of repetitive scenes and topics following a formula. In *Eva no Paraíso*, for example, one finds a meta-commentary on the basic elements of the *revista* within the song “Viva a revista” [Long live the *revista*]:

REVISTA
Para afastar a tristeza,
Para afastar o tédio,
A revista à portuguesa
‘Inda é um grande remédio.
Quatro larachas, um fado,
Mulher’s despidas com gosto,
Duas canções, um bailado,
E sai tudo bem disposto. (47)
[REVISTA
To chase away the sadness,
To drive away boredom,
The Portuguese style *revista*
Is still a great remedy.
Four jokes, a *fado*,
Women tastefully undressed
Two songs, a ballet,
And everybody comes out in a good mood.]

The *revista* is here an explicit “remedy” for sadness and boredom, which demonstrates how aware of the formula its practitioners were. The formula included jokes (*larachas*), *fado*, some nudity, songs, and dancing.

Instead of delving into the formulaic features, I have opted to structure my analysis by taking into consideration some of the main recurrent aspects that contribute to my argument that *revista* did not only represent escapist entertainment but also used humor and laughter to mock aspects of the dictatorship. The remarkable position of the genre for a historical understanding of Portuguese theater during the authoritarian regime lies in such an ambiguous practice.

In what follows, I will examine: 1) the various instances in which *revista* appears as a topic within (nearly obsessive) discussions of tradition and modernity; 2) some of the cases in which racism, sexism, and violence appear as examples of what I would call ‘dictatorial laughter,’ a type of laughter provoked by humoristic rhetoric used to oppress certain groups of

people and alienate and control the masses; 3) the presence and impact of censorship within the twelve plays; and 4) a type of hidden script or scenes and passages that reveal a critique of the regime and an escape from censorship. In sum, after reading twelve of the *revistas* in which H. Silva participated between the 1930s and the 1950s, I aim to demonstrate that to “see the familiar defamiliarized” means to analyze the genre’s ambiguity in relation with censorship and laughter. Although most examples I have provided in their written form might not necessarily provoke laughter when isolated from their context and performative elements, most denote a type of potentiality of laughter through irony and sarcasm.

In most local versions of revue theater, it was very common to discuss the theatrical form as a genre and the Portuguese version was no exception. In the twelve scripts I have analyzed, the debate was directly related to the discussion around tradition and modernity. *Revista à Portuguesa* is represented as tradition, while cinema, photography, and radio point to modernity. In comparison with other versions of *revistas*, namely those produced in Argentina, Austria, Mexico, France, and Brazil, the Portuguese version is “innocent and playful” according to the *Revista Pistarim*:

PORTUGUESA: Pois eu sou a revista portuguesa, bregeirota e brincalhona, mas no fundo mais inocente que uma película moderna. E tu, ó Zé: que preferes: a revista ou a película? (4)

[PORTUGUESA: Well, I am the Portuguese revista, cheeky and playful, but deep down more innocent than a modern film. And you, Zé: what do you prefer: the revista or the film?]

The innocence and playfulness of *revista* here contrast with the modernity associated with the development of cinema, particularly when the character asks Zé which he prefers. Cinema appears as a threat to the theatrical genre and, consequently, modernity constituted a menace to all the elements that characterized *revista*, namely *fado*, one of the most important components of the Portuguese variation.

The anxiety around cinema was related to the fear that the latter would largely replace theater. In *Revista Arre Burro* the character *Arte Dramática* [Dramatic Art] portrays such sentiment as she “feels” abandoned by the public (in favor of cinema). As a response, the character Zé da Geral, i.e., the typical *revista* theatergoer, tells her that he has not abandoned her yet:

ARTE: (Vendo-se só) E todos me abandonaram! Não há ninguém que salve o teatro? Não há ninguém que esteja a meu lado? (12)

ZÉ DA GERAL: (Da Geral do Teatro) Estou aqui eu! O Zé da revista! O Zé pagante! O Zé da geral (Vae-se encaminhando para o palco)

ARTE: Ora ainda bem! Eu tinha a certeza de que o publico não me havia de abandonar!

[ART: (Seeing herself alone) And everyone has abandoned me! Is there no one to save the theater? Is there no one to stand by me?

ZÉ DA GERAL: (From the audience) Here I am! Joe from the *revista*! The paying Joe! Average Joe! (Goes towards the stage)

ART: Well, that’s just great! I was sure the audience wouldn’t abandon me!]

Zé da Revista is portrayed as a reliable member of the audience. He is the one who pays and the one who makes *revistas* what they were at the time: “Eu, com os meus aplausos, é que tenho feito todas as revistas que têm agradado em Portugal” [I, with my applause, have made all the pleasing *revistas* in Portugal] (13). This is significant for the debate on modernity and tradition,

as it is the figure of Zé Povinho who sides with the traditional, with the eminently national. The figure of Zé Povinho, a kind of average Joe, contrasts with young, urban, and especially female audiences, as one sees in the dialogue between Eva and Tentação [Temptation] in Act 2 of *Revista Ai Bate, Bate*:

EVA: Não pensemos em coisas tristes. (*A Tentação*) Diga-me: Qual é hoje a maior tentação da mulher!

TENTAÇÃO: O cinema. Não há costureirinha da Baixa ou caixeirinha galante que não se sintam uma vampe como a Marlène ou a Joan Crawford. (62)

[EVA: Let's not think about sad things. (*To Temptation*) Tell me: What is woman's greatest temptation today?

TENTAÇÃO: The cinema. There's no downtown dressmaker or pretty cashier who doesn't feel like a vamp like Marlène or Joan Crawford.]

Temptation explicitly claims that the greatest temptation for women is cinema. The dialogue also shows how cinema and its stars were perceived to influence the masses, expanding the scope of popular figures that might influence Portuguese city-dwellers to include foreign stars.

In another scene, Eva reflects about the fact that cinema contributes to show unknown and new realities to the people, implying that *revista* portrays the same [Portuguese] actuality repeatedly:

EVA: Parece que o cinema, além de nos distrair tem a vantagem de nos revelar mundos desconhecidos, outros paraísos diferentes deste onde estamos e daquele em que viemos ao mundo. (109)

[EVA: It seems that cinema, besides distracting us, has the advantage of revealing unknown worlds to us, other paradises different from this one where we are and the one where we came into the world.]

If cinema offered other “paradises,” so did radio and art. The second act of the otherwise unremarkable *Revista Lisboa Antiga* includes a scene in which a personified Revista and Magazine discuss modernity and progress. Revista remarks: “Tens que acompanhar o progresso. Lembra-te que está na era trepidante dos quadros de Picasso, do cinema e da rádio [You have to keep up with progress. Remember that you are in the quivering age of Picasso's paintings, of cinema, and of radio] (65). Revista is aware of the pressure and ironically says to Magazine that it is important to keep up with progress. One finds similar irony in another scene, a humorous dialogue (with repetition and wordplay) titled, “Os radiófilos” [The radiophiles].

From such examples, one comes to understand how important it was for the authors of *revistas* to address the contemporary affairs that permeated urban life. While the material, artistic, and technological signs of modernity seemed to constitute a threat for *revista* as a theatrical genre and for the traditional values and identities portrayed in the shows, they were also employed as objects of mockery. Such mockery is ultimately problematic, of course, since it ended up reinforcing many of the traditional values that regime propaganda emphasized.

The way modernity or the ‘modern life’ is portrayed in the twelve *revistas* I have analyzed is also problematic in terms of gender representations. In the most remarkable scene of the second act of *Sempre em Pé*, there is a news story from the future. It takes place in 2038, a century after the time when the *revista* was written/performed. It appears as a *cena de fantasia* [fantasy scene], or something analogous to science fiction. The journalists refer to the newspaper as a *minutário*, which no longer reports the news day by day but minute by minute. Their dialogue revolves around how fast the world is changing and then refers to the deconstruction of gender roles, stating that women are the “strong sex” and men the “weak sex.” While *Sempre em*

Pé does not challenge the oppression that women experienced under the Salazarist regime, this scene stresses the relation between women's emancipation, dictatorship, and modernity. An example of how thoroughly gender roles had become naturalized takes place when the *compère* appears in the scene as a naïve figure from the past. He does not understand what is going on, and he shows surprise when he sees women fighting, playing soccer, and having a critical voice. The character affirms his incredulity by saying, “no meu tempo os machos é que se encarregavam desse serviço” [in my time, men were in charge of this service] (89-90). To the surprise of the *compère*, reporter Z responds – “É assim a vida moderna” [This is how modern life is] (90). On the one hand, it is significant that modernity is so explicitly linked to feminism. On the other hand, there is a certain irony to the scene. In conjunction with other more openly sexist and violent scenes, the futuristic scene likely both acknowledges and resists the changes that were slowly happening at the time.

In *revistas* such as *Arre Burro*, *Chuva de Mulheres*, and *Ora Agora Viras Tu*, there are scenes that constitute just a few examples of how the theatrical genre used sexism to make the audience laugh. Among the various passages of *Arre Burro* with sexist and violent content, there is an instance in which a woman is being threatened by her husband, denouncing the violence while naturalizing it. In a dialogue between “Jorge Cadeireiro” and “Rita Machona,” we read:

RITA: A mim só o que me custa é ter que cantar debaixo dos olhares de todos aqueles homens que me cubiçam...

JORGE: Não querem lá ver a desavergonhada? Bocemecê até se rebola toda! (Agarrando-a por um braço com violência) Mas também se eu a torno a ver outra vez agarrada ao Marceneiro.... Ah! Caramba!

RITA: (Tentando repeli-lo) Deixa-me! Não me maltrates! Cão!

JORGE: Que é que vossemecê disse? Cão?... (obrigando-a a ajoelhar-se) Peça já perdão ao seu homem! (Ameaça bater-lhe) (143)

[RITA: The only thing that pains me is having to sing under the gaze of all those men who lust after me...

JORGE: Don't they want to see the shameless woman? You even roll around! (Grabbing her by the arm in a violent way) But if I see you clinging to the carpenter again... Ah, boy!

RITA: (Trying to repel him) Leave me alone! Don't hurt me! You dog!

JORGE: What did you say? Dog? (Forcing her to her knees) Ask your man for forgiveness now! (Threatens to hit her)]

In one scene of *Chuva de Mulheres*, a husband withholds money from his wife because she refuses to have sex with him. As for *Ora Agora Viras Tu*, there are acts/scenes where violence against women is also naturalized, such as the scene where a “citizen” recounts a fight he had with his former girlfriend in Sintra:

CIDADÃO: Olhe, aqui estou eu que já andei apaixonado por uma sopeira e só acabei com ela por causa duma birra que tivemos em Sintra!

DIRECTORA: Uma birra?!

CIDADÃO: É verdade! Eu queria-a levar lá acima ao Castelo, pra lhe mostrar a Peninha, e ela embirrou que não havia de passar das Sétiais! Eu zanguiei-me, perdi a cabeça, dei-lhe uma bofetada...

DIRECTORA: Minha rica mãe! (102)

[CITIZEN: Look at me, I used to be in love with a cook, and I only broke up with her because of a fight we had in Sintra!

DIRECTOR: A fight?

CITIZEN: It's true! I wanted to take her upstairs to the castle, to show her the Peninha, and she lost it, saying she wouldn't go past the Sétiais! I got angry, lost my temper, and gave her a slap...

DIRECTOR: My dear mother!]

Many of these scenes are isolated in a fragmented dramatic structure, and it is thus challenging to determine the authors' point of view. It is likely, however, that these are examples of dictatorial laughter, a type of laughter caused to oppress groups of people based on the rhetoric promoted by the regime political and social values.

Along the same lines, I have identified instances in which racism and colonialism serve to make people laugh and, in a way, feel superior to other groups. A racist tone appears in *Arre Burro* in several instances, such as in the scene in which the characters debate the characteristics of opera and jazz, or what they call *ópera italiana* [Italian Opera] and *jazz dos pretos* [Black people's jazz] in a dismissive way. Another instance appears when verses of a song are to be directed to a Black man potentially in the audience. The performer discusses a letter addressed to a dark-skinned man "who looks like someone from Abyssinia!" and is the object of their affection:

(para um preto)

"É uma carta e é de amor
E assinada por Virginia
Destinada aquel' senhor
Que parece da Abissinia!

Refrain

Um morenaço
Meu amor minha ventura
Com a tua pele tão escura
Os meus olhos andam cegos!
Tenho a ilusão
Que tu, meu bem, nem adivinhas
Que estou a fazer festinhas
Na cabecinha do Negus! (125)

[(to a Black man)

It's a love letter
And signed by Virginia
addressed to that gentleman
Who looks like he's from Abyssinia!

Refrain

A dark-skinned man
My love my fortune
With your skin so dark
My eyes are blinded!
I have the illusion
One that you, my darling, can't even guess
That I'm caressing
The sweet head of the Negus!]

The scene is noticeably problematic as the character is fetishizing a black man, referring him to an Ethiopian emperor, and disregarding his own story and background. This aspect is also relevant if one considers the fact that one of the most pivotal aspects of the dictatorial regime was colonialism. At the time these *revistas* were being performed in Lisbon, Salazar's central political project was to maintain colonial power in five African countries. Colonialism is not a central theme in most of the *revistas* I have analyzed; however, it still prevailed in some instances. In *Chuva de Mulheres*, for example, there is an "African" or "Colonial" student who says that even though it is his first time in Portugal, he has known about Portugal from an early age from books. The dialogue is comical and implies praise for the colonial regime. Turning to a *revista* like *Ora Agora Viras Tu*, one witnesses another *cidadão* [male citizen] objectifying a *mulata* in a dialogue he establishes with Barata, another male character:

CIDADÃO: Meu Deus! Mas porque é que o Destino não me fez brasileiro?

BARATA: Tá maluco! Se fosse brasileiro, nascia com uma côr diferente!

CIDADÃO: Queria lá saber! Com uma morenaça destas ao meu lado, queria lá saber da cor! Nem que eu fosse verde, às riscas! Não! Verde, não, que é a cor dos leões! (64)

[CITIZEN: My God! But why didn't Fate make me Brazilian?

BARATA: You're crazy! If you were Brazilian, you'd be born with a different skin color!

CITIZEN: Who cares! With a *morenaça* like that by my side, I couldn't care less what color I was! Not even if I were green, with stripes! No, not green—that's the color of lions!]

Here sexism and racism are interrelated as a Portuguese man fetishizes a mixed-race Brazilian woman and makes wild statements regarding skin color. The last line ("No, not green, that's the color of lions!") ends with a highly localized soccer reference, since the lion is the symbol and green is the color of Sporting Clube de Portugal, one of two major soccer clubs in Lisbon²⁷. This ending is almost certainly intended to provoke laughter in an audience primarily made up of Benfica fans (Lisbon's other major soccer club). It also works to temper (with humor) the citizen's earlier comments on race and gender while trivializing racial identity.

In addition to examples of dictatorial laughter ("punching down," as it were) and under the same premise of making audiences turn their attention to the local and national rather than the foreign (usually aligned with modernity), *revistas* also heavily relied on Lisbon iconography and on regime propaganda. In *Revista Arre Burro*, for example, there is a character named Propaganda (gendered female) whose job is to advertise the city of Lisbon to foreigners through postcards. She mentions that there are several popular figures that she intends to make known to an international audience, among these, the Lisbon postman: "outra figura popular da minha coleção que pretendo tornar conhecida no estrangeiro: 'O Carteiro de Lisboa'" [Another popular figure from my collection that I intend to make known abroad: 'The Lisbon Postman'] (119). This is a sign of how much the *revista* could be aligned with the regime, especially if one takes into account the Estado Novo's interest in promoting certain "traditional" figures in the interest of a national identity. In the same *revista*, Propaganda also advertises events and places of entertainment in greater Lisbon: "Agora um lindo postal, cheio de beleza e de colorido: 'As Grandiosas festas da praia do Estoril'" [Now a beautiful postcard, full of beauty and color: 'The Grandiose Parties on Estoril's Beach'] (128). Even though most *revistas* gave relevance to the city of Lisbon, there were also places that served as a kind of example to follow. In *Ora Agora*

²⁷ Their uniforms also have stripes.

Viras Tu there is a *fantasia sobre o turismo* [phantasia on tourism], where the characters visit South America (Brazil), the Pacific Islands, and Paris, only to revert back to jokes that once again objectify women:

DIRECTORA: Uma cidade que não deves deixar de visitar é Paris – onde a vida nocturna é sempre alegre e comunicativa.

CIDADÃO: O quê! Pra ver as girls fazerem nú artístico?... Ora, adeus! Disso, também nós cá temos, e do melhor que se fabrica! (96)

[DIRECTOR: One city you shouldn't miss is Paris - where the nightlife is always lively and communicative.

CITIZEN: What! To see girls doing artistic nudes? Well, goodbye! We have that here too, and of the best quality that can be produced!]

Here one finds more evidence that the French revue was linked to feminine nudity; however, there is also a sense of national “ownership” over women. Their semi-nude bodies, as it were, form part of the national patrimony. In general, the multiple instances in which *revistas* used sexism, racism, and violence to make the audience laugh places into question the potential they had to mediate resistance to the Salazarist regime.

One can look at *revista* authorship in a circular way; however, it is crucial to remember that the state forced the censor upon show producers. For this reason, the latter's input was almost always unwelcome. In the thirty *revistas* I have collected (most of which featuring H. Silva) between the dates 1932 to 1957, different iconographic patterns/ways of censoring scripts appear.²⁸ Most of the scripts (as well as *aditamentos* and appendices) have a first page/cover loaded with seals and handwritten information (censored sections). They contain several elements, including the title, the names of the authors and composers, the seal of the censorship commissions of the Direção Geral dos Serviços de Espetáculos [General Directorate of Entertainment Services] and the Ministério Nacional de Educação [National Ministry of Education], the seal of the theater in which it took place, the process number of the archives of the political police, and a handwritten commentary containing a presentation of the cuts and respective pages, stamped by the red seal of censorship. Some pages have no cuts; others have sections cut, and others have the entire page crossed out in either blue or red ink. After the 1940s, the censorship commission began to add correspondence between the theater producers and the censorship commission and information about the plays. The data often included the title, number of acts, *quadros* [scenes], registration number, action, literary value, dramatic value, moral value, repercussion to the audience, and proposed decision for the play/*revista* (*Direção Geral*). There were two types of documents/templates, one that was issued by the Inspeção dos Espetáculos/Serviços de fiscalização [Entertainment Inspection/Supervision Services] and the other that was issued by Inspeção dos Espetáculos/Comissão de Censura [Inspection of Shows/Censorship Committee] and was more detailed about the script itself.

Regardless of the particularities of each file, one thing is true: every single page of the scripts showed the seal of censorship, including the blank pages. The cuts of the *revistas* that do not contain a report offer several avenues for a hermeneutic endeavor, while the ones that include

²⁸ I collected the following *revistas*: *Pirilau* (1932), *A Cantiga Nova* (1933), *Cabeças no Ar* (1933), *Pistarim* (1933), *Feijão Frade* (1933), *A Festa Brava* (1933), *Zé dos Pacatos* (1934), *Olha o Balão* (1935), *Peixe Espada* (1935), *Estrela de Portugal* (1936), *Arre, Burro/Nove a Zero* (1936), *Chuva de Mulheres* (1937), *A Dança da Luta* (1938), *Iscas com Elas* (1938), *Na Ponta da Unha* (1939), *A Desgarrada* (1941), *Boa Nova* (1942), *Toma Lá, Dá Cá* (1943), *A Canção Nacional* (1944), *Bolacha Americana* (1945), *Tiro Liro* (1946), *Ai Bate, Bate* (1948), *Agora Viras tu* (1949), *Sempre em Festa* (1950), *Eva no Paraíso* (1953, 1957), *Lisboa Antiga* (1953), *De Bota Abaixo* (1955), *Já Vais Ai* (1956), *D'aqui fala o Zé* (1956), and *Casa da Sorte* (1957).

reports tell a little more. Nevertheless, they both allow access to the narrative of each *revista* and allow for an analysis of the iconography of official censorship²⁹.

Revista Arre Burro, for example, does not include a censorship report; instead, there is correspondence between the censorship commission and the theater production team of Teatro Variedades. There are moments when the company explicitly asks to be able to keep certain words. The response is that some of them can be kept, but others cannot, which means that there was room to change the censor's decision. The folder of *Arre Burro* also includes a letter from the theater requesting the presence of the censor (condition *sine qua non* for the company to present the show). The letters display a tone of reverence that the company uses in dealing with the censorship commission, possibly employed as a strategy not only to encourage the commission to accept the script but also to expedite the process. Here one sees how important it was to establish a cordial relationship with the censors. Lines such as, "Esperando mais uma vez de V. Exa e dos dignos membros da comissão de censura a benevolência habitual, subscrevemo-nos..." [Expecting once again from you and the worthy members of the censure committee the usual benevolence, we subscribe...] show that relationship.

In the folder of *Chuva de Mulheres*, there is a letter from the producers asking the censorship commission to go to the rehearsal and another one asking the same commission to postpone the meeting due to installation difficulties. The second act introduces us to several numbers in which there are censored (prohibited) parts that seem to denounce the repression in the country. In one of them, there is an important character —*falador* [talkative person] —that the compère describes as someone who talks, talks, and does not say much. As a response, *falador* answers that in *revista*, one cannot say more than that, which I read as a reference to the impact of censorship:

COMPÈRE: Mas afinal de contas o senhor falou, falou e não disse nada

FALADOR: O que é que o senhor queria que eu lhe dissesse...Isto é uma rábula de revista... Não se pode dizer mais. (87)

[COMPÈRE: But after all you talked and talked and said nothing

TALKER: What did you want me to tell you... This is a *revista* sketch... No more can be said.]

Here any information that might potentially point to the regime's repression was immediately censored, underscoring the oppressive mechanisms of the dictatorship.

Revista Bolacha Americana is interesting at various levels, but the censorship material stands out. There is a very informative letter written by João Cerveira Pinto, the sub-inspector of the Porto District, addressed to his superiors in Lisbon.³⁰ The sub-inspector is reporting on a show that was performed in Teatro Sá da Bandeira, in Porto. A mix of the *revistas Estás na Sua* and *Bolacha Americana*, the show shocked the sub-inspector, who affirms in his letter that, "O

²⁹ Even though they are not analyzed in this chapter, *revistas A Dança da Luta, A Canção Nacional, A Boa Nova, Sempre em Festa* include a letter addressed to the Censorship Commission requesting the presence of the censor in the dress rehearsal and *A Desgarrada* contains an "informal" report.

³⁰ In addition to this letter, which I find particularly intriguing, the folder contains a censorship report - *relatório de censura* - where, in addition to the basic information about *Bolacha Americana* such as the title, authors, actors, and so on, we find categories such as "*valor moral*" (moral value), "*valor literário*" (literary value), and "*decisões a tomar*" (decisions to make). I find this to be revealing of how much the regime interfered with cultural production. The folder also includes letters requesting a censorship dress rehearsal for the censorship commission. When I think about these rehearsals, I wonder if the censors laughed. Would they laugh inside while, at the same time, censoring jokes about Salazar? Did they enjoy being spectators? While this is almost impossible to know, considering the type of archive under study, it is an avenue for further research.

espectáculo constituiu um autêntico escândalo sob o ponto de vista político” [The show constituted an authentic scandal from a political point of view] and that, “Apesar de não conhecer o original das revistas representadas, não existiam para mim dúvidas nenhuma de que não eram respeitados os cortes que a Censura fatalmente deveria ter feito” [Although I do not know the original of the enacted *revistas*, there was no doubt in my mind that the cuts necessarily made by the censors were not respected]. Pinto is shocked because he assumes that the production had deliberately failed to respect the cuts made by the censorship commission. Perhaps because he did not wish to have problems with the Chief Inspector, he asked the producers to show the original script (which would inevitably contain cuts). Upon receiving it, the sub-inspector continues the letter by specifying the parts that were performed despite having been cut from the original. From *Revista Estás na Sua*, for example, the original with the cuts reads:

“ZÉ: Eu sou dum paíz da Europa à beira-mar plantado, onde se diz que há dinheiro e há mesmo; onde se diz que há mulheres bonitas e há mesmo; onde se diz que há bom vinho e há mesmo; ~~onde se diz que há liberdade e não há mesmo razão para se dizer o contrário.~~” (2)³¹

[ZÉ: I am from a seaside country in Europe where it is said that there is money and there really is; where it is said that there are beautiful women and there really is; where it is said that there is good wine and there really is; ~~where it is said that there is freedom and there really is no reason to say otherwise.~~]

The original reveals with irony the deliberate effort of the practitioners to denounce, through laughter, the lack of freedom of speech when they say, “onde se diz que há liberdade e não há mesmo razão para se dizer o contrário” [where it is said that there is freedom and there really is no reason to say otherwise.] It also reveals the censorship *démarches* to cut everything that might potentially put the regime into question. However, the performed version is more straightforward in denouncing the repression. According to the censor, the actor Soares Correia substituted the censored version with “onde se diz que há liberdade e não há mesmo” [where it is said that there is freedom and there really isn’t], which in his view was worse than the original version. These indignations became very visible over the years, as the regime’s political police (PIDE) was hypervigilant about almost any sort of political speech. In another scene, a character complains about this repression: “Na minha barbearia há um letreiro que diz: É proibido discutir política. Mas para quê o letreiro, se em parte nenhuma a política se pode discutir?” [In my barbershop there is a sign that says: It is forbidden to discuss politics. But why the sign, if politics can’t be discussed anywhere?]. With this line intact, the audience would be reminded of the prohibition on political speech and potentially question it (even if they laughed at the portrayed situation). The sub-inspector finishes his letter, saying that he has enumerated the most “scandalous” aspects of the show, leaving up to the Chief Inspector the decision regarding “sanções proporcionadas à gravidade das infracções” [sanctions in proportion to the seriousness of the infringements].

The *Revista Ai Bate, Bate* archival folder includes a good deal of correspondence between the Censorship Commission and the producers. The first document is a letter from the Chief Inspector, Oscar de Freitas, addressed to Piero Benardon (the producer), saying that the company should respect the changes approved by the Censorship commission under the penalty of being

³¹ The use of strikethroughs in this dissertation indicates that the word or sentence has been cut, i.e., prohibited by the state censors.

responsible for future transgressions under law enforcement (Decreto 35:165). The folder also contains letters from censor Francisco Lage notifying the Chief Censor of the cuts and prohibitions of the *revista* script. There is also correspondence between the company “Piero Benardon” and the Censorship Commission attempting to schedule/change the dress rehearsal date, as well as to change the name/title of the *revista* from *O Nu* (prohibited by the censors, as it was considered “politically inconvenient”) to *Ai Bate, Bate*. Finally, the folder includes a report with the approval, with cuts, of pages “de natureza e intenção indecente, porca e obscena” [of indecent and obscene nature and intention] and of other “inconvenientes e de má tendência” [inconvenient and of bad tendencies]. Only after reading all these documents, which show a bit of the archeology of the *revista*, can one access the script itself.

Revista Ora Agora Viras Tu was produced by the company Empresa Piero Bernardon and performed in Teatro Variedades in 1949. The hierarchical organization of the censorship commission shows how centralized the entire process was and how much power the censors had. According to the report, the *revista* had two acts, with a total of 23 *quadros*. It was performed on 19 February 1949, at 10:10 pm. The report contains the names of the censors who were present, as well as the actors (including H. Silva), *compères*, *chefes de quadros* (scene heads), dancers, “attractions,” costumes (defined by the censor as “*própria de revista-fantasia*” [typical of fantasy-*revista*]), stage set, cuts not maintained by the censorship, and changes, among others. In the “observations” section, the sub-Inspector reports on the premiere of the performance when, allegedly, Salazar’s voice had been impersonated by the actor, an aspect that reveals how the actors tried to trick the censors:

Na primeira sessão da estreia da revista, notei que a voz do locutor do quadro “His Master Voyce” se assemelhava à voz de Sua Ex^a. O Presidente do Conselho de Ministros, o que não foi verificado no ensaio geral a que oficialmente assisti, dia 19, e creio que igualmente no primeiro ensaio geral da citada revista no dia 17, a que assistiram os SubInspectores Coronel (?) e Silveira Gomes. (*Revista Ora Agora Viras Tu*)

[In the first session of the premiere of the *revista*, I noticed that the voice of the announcer in the “His Master’s Voice” scene resembled the voice of His Excellency the President of the Council of Ministers, which was not verified in the dress rehearsal that I officially attended, on the 19th, and I believe that it was not also verified in the first dress rehearsal of the mentioned *revista* on the 17th, attended by the Sub-Inspectors Coronel (?) and Silveira Gomes.]

The only aspect I find to be unique about *Revista Lisboa Antiga* is the section called “*emendas aos cortes de censura*” [amendments to the censorship cuts] (104), where one finds “onde dizia” [where it said] and “passa a dizer-se” [is now said], signaling the before-and-after of the censorship cuts.

The folder for *Revista Casa da Sorte* contains several censorship-related aspects to be considered. One of them is a letter from its author, Carlos Lopes, addressed to the Inspector dos Espectáculos [Inspector of Entertainment]. Lopes requests the copy of the *revista* that belongs to the archive of the Censorship Commission so that he can select acts to include in the *revistas* he was preparing to be performed in Africa. This is an intriguing example of how *revistas* were a pastiche—a composition of acts, sometimes recycled from other *revistas* and (re)used in various contexts. Another element is the report of the Serviços de Fiscalização [Inspection Services] and a letter from the company manager asking the inspector to postpone the censorship rehearsal, since they did not have the censored version in their possession. This indicates that sometimes

there were changes/delays in the presentation of shows due to the dependence of companies on approval from the censorship commission. In addition to these two elements, there is a letter in the folder in which the authors of *Casa da Sorte* ask the president of “Comissão de Censura aos Espectáculos” [Performance Censorship Committee] to reconsider some of the cuts. It is especially intriguing that the signatories make their case by saying that they are well accustomed to the criteria used by the commission, and they therefore do not normally see their plays censored in any significant way:

Estão os signatários, pela prática adquirida, ao cabo de cêrca de uma centena de peças representadas, habituados ao critério da Digníssima Comissão de Censura e a isso devem o facto de nunca terem cortes substanciais. Costumam, sim, as suas peças, sofrer cortes facilmente remediáveis e que nunca, como no caso presente, impediriam a representação da peça. E porque à acção da Censura e à sua habitual boa vontade no sentido de não prejudicar autores nem empresas estão habituados, estavam no caso presente, certos de que a peça em causa pouco ou nada teria a cortar (é evidente que os autores só assim pensavam por ao cabo de uma longa carreira de teatro se julgarem, aproximadamente, conhecedores do critério da Censura.) vistos os cortes marcados, vêm os autores da revista “Casa da Sorte” rogar a Vossa Excelência que lhes não sejam aumentadas as limitações a que já estavam sujeitos e com as quais estão absolutamente identificados. (*Revista Casa da Sorte*)

[The signatories are, by practice, after about a hundred plays performed, accustomed to the criteria of the Most Dignified Censorship Commission and to this they owe the fact that they never have substantial cuts. Rather, their plays usually suffer cuts that are easily remedied and that would never, as in this case, prevent the play from being performed. And because they are not accustomed to the action of censorship and their usual goodwill in the sense of not harming authors or companies, they were in the present case, certain that the play in question would have little or nothing to cut (it is clear that the authors only thought so because after a long career in the theater they think they know, approximately, the criterion of censorship). Seeing the cuts marked, the authors of the *revista* “Casa da Sorte” come to ask Your Excellency not to increase the limitations to which they were already subject and with which they are absolutely identified.]

The authors then comment on each number/act that was censored/expurgated, trying to convince the commission to reconsider the cuts. Some examples are significant. For example, the explanation they give of the *compadre*’s entrance to be intriguing. They disregard the potential of “Zé” (again, a kind of “regular Joe”) to criticize his circumstances beyond a generic and traditional reference to personal misery:

Entrada do *Compadre*: A entrada deste personagem na nossa revista, é similar a muitas outras, que apresentam o eterno “Zé” inconformado com a carestia da vida e outros factos quotidianos, que critica à sua maneira pitoresca e já tradicional. Não descortinamos, portanto, a razão do corte, nem onde os Exmos. Censores puderam ver intenções destrutivas.” (*Revista Casa da Sorte*)

[Entry of the *Compadre*: The entry of this character in our *revista* is similar to many others, which feature the eternal ‘Joe’ unhappy with his poverty and other everyday facts, which he criticizes in a picturesque and traditional way. We

therefore do not perceive the reason for the cut, nor where the censors might see any destructive intentions.]

Another example is included in the act “*Casa da Sorte*” where there is a clear reference to Salazar:

Casa da Sorte – Foram cortados todos os versos deste número, onde se manifesta o temor pelo afastamento, algum dia, do nosso prestigiado Chefe do Governo. Virá outro que se sacrifique tanto pela Nação como ele? Ora isto só constitui da parte dos autores, uma homenagem justíssima a um homem que é uma figura ímpar na vida portuguesa.” (*Revista Casa da Sorte*)

[House of Fortune – All the verses in this number where one finds expressed fear regarding the eventual removal of our prestigious Head of Government were cut. Will there be another who sacrifices as much for the nation as he has? Now this only constitutes, on the part of the authors, a very just tribute to a man who is a unique figure in Portuguese life.]

In the same letter, the authors mention the importance of not putting the “trabalhadores do teatro” [theater workers] at risk, which would happen should they have to remodel the *revista* entirely. They end the letter with the same level of formality, using a language that indicates submission to the commission: “Confiados no alto critério de Vossa Excelência e da Digníssima Comissão a que preside, para uma revisão a um tempo justa e generosa, esperam diferimento” [Trusting in the high judgment of Your Excellency and the Most Worthy Commission over which you preside, for a review that is both fair and generous, [the undersigned] expect a favorable decision]. Finally, the report *Casa da Sorte* includes a somewhat detailed evaluation in addition to the theme, names, and numbers of acts. The literary value, for example, is termed “Nenhum, em geral” [overall, none], and the moral value is recorded as “de um modo geral, mau” [overall, bad].

Revista Eva no Paraíso includes two folders, one referring to a 1953 performance/process and one referring to 1957 (with *aditamentos*). A letter from the company (Empresa Teatro Alegre) asks the Inspector dos Espectáculos [Inspector of Entertainment] to review the cuts and approve them as suitable for children under thirteen. The letter shows that the company was willing to compromise the content of the *revista* to make sure they had a broader audience and, consequently, would derive an increase in revenue. There is a Relatório dos Serviços de Fiscalização [Inspection Services Report] with the basic information about the play but in the information sheet from the Comissão de Censura [Censorship Committee] provides few details except for the cuts themselves. In a way, there is not a lot of difference between this report and the first page of other *revistas*, where the pages/cuts are written down. The censors were either unprepared, lazy, or simply uninterested in the literary, dramatic, and moral value of the *revista*.

The archive of *revista Lisboa Antiga*, performed in Teatro Apolo in 1953, includes a dress rehearsal report (28 January 1953) where, once again, there are details of the show: the censors, the leading figures (actors, *compères*, dancers), costumes, authors, composers, and director (Álvaro Pereira), among others. The folder also includes letters from the company, both asking to schedule a dress rehearsal and asking for a change in the dress rehearsal date. Finally, the folder includes a report where it is stated that the literary value of the *revista* is “inferior ao que é corrente neste género de literatura teatral” [inferior to what is common in this genre of theatrical literature], the dramatic value is “tirando uma ou outra cena de reduzido interesse, (...) muito fraco,” [apart from one or another scene of little interest, (...) very weak], and the moral

value is “nulo” [nil]. As for potential impact on the public, there is the following: “É de [?] que a influência sobre o público seja insignificante e que com os cortes indicados não suscite sentimentos ou reações inconvenientes” [It is of [?] that the influence on the public should be insignificant and that with the cuts indicated it will not arouse unseemly feelings or reactions]. These observations are particularly intriguing. To begin, the censors took on the role of literary critics while, at the same time, strengthening the repressive contours of a regime that imposed a morality framework on the population.

The *revista Já Vais Ai* (1956) was a two-act *revista* with eighteen scenes to be performed in the Salão de Espectáculos ABC. Its folder includes two reports as well as letters about the dress rehearsals. The reports contain very few comments. The *revista* is somewhat repetitive and uninteresting, except for the cuts in the act between a doctor and Zé Povinho (due to the presence of sexual innuendo and a critique of capitalism), a scene between the characters Lisboa Moderna [Modern Lisbon] and Lisboa Antiga [Old Lisbon], and an analysis of *revista* evolution over time (where there is a comparison between 1900 and 1956).

Bolacha Americana presents scenes/references to Spain’s head of government, Francisco Franco, the rivalry between Lisboa, Coimbra, and Porto, and to soccer, where wordplay is used to provoke laughter. Most of the scenes are not worthy of note. However, there is a passage where the censors alter a reference to sexual intercourse that results in a funnier passage (strengthening an incongruity effect). From a reference to a romantic exchange between the character and their fiancé, the censor’s change implies a romantic interlude with a bicycle: “Ah sim? Olha que pena! Se você me tem dito isso antes de eu casar, ia p’ra lá passar a noite de núpcias com a minha Zefa (censored to “a minha bicicleta”)” (27) [Oh yeah? What a shame! If you had told me that before I got married, I would have gone there to spend my wedding night with my Zefa (censored to “my bicycle”)]. While one does not know whether the audience was or was not aware of the change, the passage becomes a moment to laugh veiled at the regime’s censorship in general since the latter had the power to change and cut any passage.

The examples provided so far in the context of the impact of the state censorship toward theater show that beyond limits on the freedom of speech, there was a great deal of bureaucratic intervention in the process of staging a *revista*. Practitioners had to go through different stages of review and stacks of paperwork until the production was approved. This created several difficulties for everyone involved; however, it was also part of what allowed the genre to flourish through veiled and indirect references, as Rebello suggests: “...it is no less certain that, in this obscure period, the *revista* was one of the rare theater genres in which criticism of the regime, veiled though it was, could be made among us, and often with an incisiveness that other genres did not know, or were not allowed to have” (*História* 28). Veiled references recognized by the audience but not the censors opened up the possibility of critique. At times, this took the form of experiencing an atmosphere characterized by color, laughter, sound, relaxation, sexual innuendos, and joy, provoked by the corporality of the artists who, on stage, gave all their energy to the spectacle. The experience challenged the model by which the Portuguese of the period were compelled to live, and it organized the senses because the characters showed alternative ways of moving their bodies and because many of the sketches defamiliarized what was all-too familiar. What I mean by this is that many *revistas* made fun of familiar topics and experiences in an incongruous way, i.e., they provoked laughter through unexpected and unsuitable situations. This incongruity resulted in laughter and in a jolt of memory, the latter not only in terms of recalling facts but also concerning the memory of sensory knowledge. At other times, the “hidden script” manifested in rebellious acts, such as performing things that had been

previously censored or changing the approved scripts at the last minute to improvise a critique of the regime on stage.

Some *revistas* only thinly veil their criticism. *Chuva de Mulheres*, for example, includes scenes dealing with the difficulties of living in Portugal. The first act contains several scenes where the characters discuss emigration, namely to Brazil, in order to improve their living conditions. There is also a scene about the sea and the mythology of the fisherman who goes overseas, a place of danger and yet of survival. In the *aditamentos* [amendments] of *Bolacha Americana*, there are scenes where characters represent Portuguese emigrants in Brazil, looking for opportunities. However, the most critical aspects concern the critique of the regime (namely, the lack of free elections, free speech, and the duration of the dictatorship). In one pivotal scene, two bookstore owners debate the difficulties they have keeping their businesses open. At some point in their dialogue, they mention free elections through wordplay (and phonetic similarity between the words “*edições*” [editions] and “*eleições*” [elections]), which would eventually be cut by the censor reading the script:

1º LIVREIRO: Eu até já me lembrei de fazer como se faz lá por fora! Fazer novas edições, ~~edições livres!~~ (cut)

2º LIVREIRO: Não se meta nisso, homem! Por eu anunciar que ia fazer edições é que me caiu o Diabo em casa! (140)

[1ST BOOKSELLER: I’ve even thought of doing what is done abroad! Make new editions, ~~free editions!~~

2ND BOOKSELLER: Stay out of it, man! I announced I was going to do my own editions, and the devil fell on my house!]

Another example, in the *aditamentos* of this *revista*, is the “*rábula João Contente*” [Happy John sketch], which is accompanied by a note from the censor saying that he will only give an opinion during the dress rehearsal. One might assume from this that the censor wanted to see how the sketch would be performed, since it is about a character who is happy because people can finally speak. In his dialogue with Zé, the *compère*, João Contente explains his excitement:

ZÉ: Mas afinal o que foi que lhe aconteceu para você vir tão contente?

João: O quê, você não sabe? Pois então oiça e alegre-se como eu: Já podemos todos falar!

ZÉ: Eu cá já podia desde nascença! Felizmente, não nasci nem mudo nem gago!

JOÃO: Não é nada disso! Podemos falar mas é p’ra dizermos alto tudo quanto pensamos! Podemos falar, mas é para protestarmos contra o que estiver mal! Podemos falar mas é p’ra expormos as nossas opiniões! Por exemplo: - Você sabe o que é que eu penso do momento actual? Não sabe? Pois eu vou-lho dizer alto, abertamente, desassombradamente! Chegue-se cá! (Zé chega-se. João Contente segreda-lhe)

(...)

JOÃO: Digo-lh’ó e é em voz alta, que a gente agora, felizmente já pode desabafar à vontade! Assim com a boca aberta, p’ra toda a gente ouvir! Então por exemplo, admita-se lá...Chegue-se cá! (Segreda-lhe novamente)

(...)

ZÉ: Está bem! Você tem razão, lá isso tem! Mas não grite assim olhe que você ainda arranja algum sarilho!

JOÃO: Arranjava algum sarilho dantes! Dantes! Agora não, porque agora, felizmente já se pode desabafar à vontade! E é por isso que eu desabafo! Você sabe a razão porque as batatas estão a apodrecer? Não sabe? (182)

[ZÉ: What happened to you to make you so happy after all?

JOHN: What, you don't know? Well, listen to me and rejoice like me: we can all talk now!

ZÉ: I have been able to since birth! Fortunately, I was born neither mute nor a stutterer!

JOHN: It's not like that! We can talk, but it's to say out loud what we think! We can talk, but it's to protest what's wrong! We can talk, but it's to express our opinions. For example: Do you know what I think of the present moment? Don't you know? Well, I'm going to tell it to you loudly, openly, clearly! Come here! (Zé comes closer. Happy John whispers to him).

(...)

JOHN: I'm telling you, and I'm telling you out loud, that now, fortunately, we can talk freely! With our mouths open, so that everyone can hear! So, for example, let's admit it... Come here! (Whispers again)

(...)

ZÉ: OK, you're right, you're right! But don't shout like that or you'll get into trouble!

John: I'd get in trouble before! Before! Not now, because now, fortunately, you can talk freely. And that's why I let off steam. Do you know why the potatoes are rotting? Don't you?]

While one sees the excitement generated by being able to speak freely, there is also fear in the words of the *compère* – “não grite assim olhe que você ainda arranja algum sarilho!” [Don't shout like that, you'll get in trouble!] Another example of cuts showing that this script presents some critique of the regime is in the scene “A rapariga do gato” [The girl with a cat]. The young woman talks about a cat that is 19 years old, information that is censored because it hints at the duration of the dictatorial regime at the time (1926-45). The girl even says that the cat does not want to leave her house, implying a desire for a change in the status quo:

ZÉ: ~~Há dezanove anos?~~ Então já percebi! ~~Aí é que está o gato!~~ Mas p'rá menina o ter há tanto tempo é porque gosta muito dele!

RAPARIGA: Você parece que é parvo! Quere dizer que ele habituou-se à casa e ~~não há maneira de querer sair de lá!~~ É mesmo um amor! Olhe que às vezes, só lhe falta falar!

(...)

~~Só dum gato lá da rua que tem umas grandes bigodaças é que ele não gosta nada!~~
~~O gato dos bigodes é que ele não há meio de gramar!~~ (192-3)

[ZÉ: ~~Nineteen years ago?~~ So I get it! ~~That's the cat!~~ But if you've had him for so long, it's because you really like him!

GIRL: You must be a fool! You mean he has gotten used to the house ~~and there is no way he wants to leave!~~ He is a real sweetheart! Sometimes it seems he can do everything but talk!

(...)

~~The only one he doesn't like is a cat on the street with big whiskers! The cat with the whiskers, he can't stand!]~~

Moreover, while the girl's cat refers to Salazar (in which case the girl would be the nation), who "has gotten used to the house and there is no way he wants to leave," the cat with big whiskers "he can't stand" can be a reference to Joseph Stalin. This aspect not only shows the political incompatibilities between the Portuguese dictatorship and the Soviet Union regime led by Stalin but also suggests the potential for laughter as the audience thinks of the two leaders as "cats."

In *Ai Bate*, *Bate* there are various scenes that mock narratives from the Bible and produce a comic effect, namely (but not exclusively) through the unusual situations in which the characters Adam and Eve are portrayed. By mocking Biblical scenes, the performers are making fun of Catholicism, one of the backbones of the regime. Act I begins with Adam not recognizing Eve, which provokes laughter. Their interaction is flirtatious, though Adam openly objectifies Eve. In the scene, "Tríptico de Lisboa" [Lisbon Triptych], Adam and Eve go to Lisbon—described as a paradise—dressed like tourists. The *sinaleiro* [signalman] appears in the scene to teach them about peonage. He treats Adam casually, fining him for not knowing the rules. The whole interaction provokes laughter, mainly because of its incongruity (one does not expect Adam to be ticketed by a traffic officer). The scene is followed by a dialogue between Lisbon and Adam (22). The exchange produces a comic effect, not only because of the personification of the city but also because of the comparison that is made between the city/character and the Virgin Mary (the city as an entity that gives birth to bridges, monuments, etc.). There is also a scene that deconstructs the tale of Noah's Ark (29), making the audience laugh at the absurdity of the narrative. Overall, something that distinguishes this *revista* is that the characters Adam and Eve appear throughout the script. Since the genre called for fragmentation and often did not include the repeated presence of characters, the repeated appearance of these two characters gives a more cohesive structure to the play and, consequently, to the comic effect.

Similar to other *revistas* from the 1950s, *Daqui fala o Zé* (1956) repeats a somewhat repetitive formula that includes allusions to how to create a *revista*, historical figures, Lisbon neighborhoods, *fado* and samba, the hardship of Zé Povinho, the modern life versus the "vida antiga," among other common themes. The only thing noteworthy is a censored/cut line with an allusion to Salazar through a play on his paternal last name ("Oliveira," which also means "olive tree"): "ninguém te mandou ires contra a Oliveira" [no one told you to go against the olive tree] (2). In fact, the allusion to the noun *oliveira* to allude to the dictator appears in several other *revistas*, such as *Casa da Sorte*. Some of the scenes of the script highlight aspects of the regime, while others repeat some common themes with slight variations. A common topic is the misery of Zé Povinho, who appears in this *revista* having suicidal thoughts because of the hardship of his life. What is different about the scene of *Casa da Sorte* is that when he talks about hanging himself, he specifically mentions that the best tree from which to do so would be the olive tree, an obvious allusion to Salazar:

~~BOM HUMOR: Porque não procuraste uma figueira que é a mais indicada para enforeamentos?~~

~~OPTIMISMO: Porque preferiste a oliveira?~~

~~ZÉ: Simpatias. Sou doido por azeitonas!~~

~~SIMPATIA: A oliveira é o símbolo da paz! (5)~~

~~[GOOD MOOD: Why didn't you look for a fig tree, which is best suited for hangings?~~

~~OPTIMISM: Why did you opt for the olive tree?~~

~~ZÉ: Sympathies. I'm crazy about olives!~~

~~SYMPATHY: The olive tree is the symbol of peace!]~~

It is worth mentioning that the censors cut Simpatia's ([Sympathy] claim that "the olive tree is the symbol of peace." This is likely so because they perceived the scene to be sarcastic altogether, i.e., that Oliveira (Salazar) was in reality a symbol of conflict. In the same scene, there is also a direct reference to repression when, in a dialogue between Zé and Sinceridade, Zé wonders about the importance of speaking freely:

ZÉ: Mas para que é que me serve a sinceridade?

SINCERIDADE: Para poderes falar abertamente! Para poderes dizer o que sentes!

ZÉ: Para poder dizer o que sinto? À minha vontade? Sem papas na língua? Não!

Essa agora, é para rir! (Ri comicamente)

AMOR: Minhas amigas, operou-se o milagre! O Zé já ri! Bravo! É assim mesmo!

Anima-te, Zé! (7)

[ZÉ: But what good is sincerity to me?

SINCERITY: So you can speak openly! So you can say what you feel!

ZÉ: So I can say what I feel? At my ease? Without mincing my words? No, now

that's a laugh, (laughs comically)

LOVE: My friends, the miracle has worked! Joe's laughing now! Bravo! That's

the way to go! Cheer up, Joe!]

In addition to observations about the dictator and the lack of freedom of speech, there is also a section about elections that was cut by the censors:

Inda há bocado, encontrou a gente,

Correndo as ruas, nas nossas funções,

Junto com lixo um recipiente,

B'lotins de votos, para as eleições:

E com certeza, quem pr'a lá botou

Os papelinhos foi por alengandar,

Ou outro sítio então não encontrou,

Que fosse próprio pr'a lá ir botar! (24)

[Earlier we found,

Running the streets, at our functions,

Along with garbage a container,

Ballot papers, for the elections:

And sure enough, whoever put

The little papers there was fooling around,

Or found no better place,

And so just put them there!]

Even though these lines were cut, they reveal an important critique the *revistas* wished to convey: the lack of elections and, subsequently, of democracy in the country.

Conclusion

One of the principal features of *revistas à portuguesa* is that they provide moments of "breathing." That is, they furnish the opportunity to forget for a moment about the imprisonment of mind and the senses during Portugal's long period of dictatorship. There are also moments of comic relief in Portuguese revue theater, as *revista* was simply "too popular to be forbidden"

(Santos 289), as was the case with much political theater.³² When the audience laughed in the theater, something happened. One can presume that the laughing body, primarily through a type of laughter that is open-mouthed and loud, moved all its muscles and cells, promoting a tension between the forbidden and the free expression of movements and the sensorium. In essence, laughter functioned as a temporary burst in the interstices of censorship and challenged the sensory model of the regime. However, the “laughing body” of the audience also often enough released tension at the expense of marginalized groups.

In the end, the production and development of *revista à portuguesa* during the Estado Novo was amply ambiguous, though it is extremely important to consider if one is to understand the evolution of modern Portuguese theater. As evidence of this ambiguity, there is the Parque Mayer, which contributed to a more thorough sensorial experience of *revista* for the theatergoer.

The *revista à portuguesa* inevitably operated and made sense within the context of a powerful binarism between “popular” theater and its “serious” counterpart. Due to this lack of perceived seriousness, there are certain methodological constraints inherent to an analysis of *revista à portuguesa*. One strategy to overcome these difficulties involves a close analysis of documentation provided by the Censorship Commission and the sketches that reflect the literary and political complexities that playwrights and performers had to manage. In the end, the censor’s blue pencil was only partially effective at censoring the sections where *revista* challenged the repressive cultural impositions of the regime. Future avenues of research will undoubtedly include a comprehensive approach to the massive archive of photographs, newspapers, flyers, programs, and other elements that form the constellation of laughter in *revista à portuguesa*.

In the end, *revista à portuguesa* served as an effective government tool, insofar as censorship kept most performances within set parameters and humor served to support the dominant classes (Rebello, *História* 28). Nevertheless, in a context marked by repression, *revista* was also a space of critique, laughter, and a reordering of the sensorium.

³² Although one cannot think of most productions as “political theater” inspired by compositional strategies of Brechtian A-effect that would emerge mainly in the 1960s, *revista* performed micro-resistances to the regime censorship as theater done politically.

Chapter 2

Laughter as a Rhetorical Reaction to Violence in *O Judeu* (1966) by Bernardo Santareno³³

In a 1971 interview with Edite Soeiro, Santareno advocated for a theater for the people: Porque, parece-me, o Teatro não deve ser dirigido a uma minoria intelectual, mas, tanto quanto possível, ao grande público, apanhando os maiores contingentes. É claro que tudo isto é teórica, porque o público português, que vai ao teatro, não é o povo, mas o burguês. E este tem os seus vícios adquiridos e muito pouco transformáveis, muito pouco redutíveis. Esta minha peça teria o seu lugar junto de um povo mesmo povo. Aquele que está habituado à Revista, ao teatro de comédia e de farsa e que em “O Duelo” teria um espectáculo capaz de o interessar e com motivações mais elevadas, tanto estéticas como de ordem temática, sociológica. (*Bernardo* 56)

[Because, it seems to me, Theater should not be aimed at an intellectual minority, but, as much as possible, at the great public, capturing the largest contingents. Of course, all this is theoretical, because the Portuguese public that goes to the theater is not the people but the bourgeois. And they have their acquired vices, which are difficult to change, hard to reduce. This play of mine would have its place among the people, the very people. People who are used to the Revista, to the theater of comedy and farce, and who, in *The Duel*, would have a show capable of interesting them and with higher motivations, aesthetic, thematic, and sociological]

This passage highlights the opposition between serious/bourgeois and popular/comedic audiences. On the one hand, Santareno advocates against theater as a practice only accessible to an intellectual minority—the bourgeois Portuguese theatergoers. On the other hand, and even though he does not exclude or question the popularity of comedic forms, he considers the aesthetic, thematic, and sociological components of the most popular one—*revista*—to be not as “elevated” (i.e., intellectually developed) as they could be. Thus, one can infer that throughout his career Santareno aimed to create pieces that would be produced for larger audiences while maintaining certain aesthetic qualities and a certain sociopolitical stance. Nevertheless, and contrary to *revista* or other “commercial” playwrights, Santareno, to a certain extent, did not seem to self-censor his work to the point where the censorship commission would allow it to circulate and be performed. Consequently, although the playwright continuously developed his craft, most of his plays were censored or banned, causing him frustration but leaving scholars with plenty of material to study.

Critical approaches to theatrical productions that challenged the dictatorial regime have established a binary between plays written in a serious tone and those written in a humoristic one, creating an associated hierarchy in which the latter had less prestige than the former. Moreover, this distinction was typically linked to two types of theater: one that was more focused on “entertaining” the masses (like the *Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa* discussed in the previous chapter) and a bourgeois, revolutionary, and intellectualized dramaturgy (influenced in some cases by the German dramatist Brecht). In this dissertation, I am embracing the ambiguities in these theatrical projects and showing how they coexist as a continual movement. By this I mean that the different initiatives projected their voices onto different audiences—”each

³³ A portion of this chapter has been published in Portuguese, see de Moraes Gama, pp. 237–254.

need[ing] the other for its existence” (Billig 242)—putting the spectator at the center of theatrical productions. I also mean that the initiatives included techniques operating in a dialectical motion, a concept developed by Michael Billig that is useful for looking at seriousness and laughter as rhetorical devices that can have disciplinary or provocative effects on the audience, particularly in the case of revolutionary theater. In Chapter 1, I pointed out the importance of laughter in *Teatro de Revista* for seeing “the familiar defamiliarized” in the context of the authoritarian regime. I also showed that *revistas* were produced through co-authorship, which makes the scripts more about a multitude of voices and performative embodiment and less about an authorial voice whose personal story and production context matter. In the current chapter, I offer a reading of *O Judeu* [The Jew] (1966) by the Portuguese dramatist Santareno. As it is the case with some other dramatists of his time, Santareno’s plays have a very clear and strong authorial voice and *O Judeu* is no exception. In which I analyze how so-called serious theater entails several aspects related to the philosophical concept of “seriousness” and laughter at the same time. Through a close reading of the play, I argue that laughter appears not as a physiological reaction or one exclusively contingent upon humorous objects (as in revue, to a certain extent) but as a rhetorical and dialectic reaction that promotes critical thinking on the part of the audience, even in contexts where “seriousness” prevails.

Santareno was born António Martinho do Rosário in Santarém on November 19, 1920, and died in Lisbon on August 20, 1980, before he ever saw *O Judeu* on stage.³⁴ After graduating from secondary school in Santarém, he moved to Lisbon to begin a medical education that he finished in Coimbra, becoming a doctor specialized in psychology/psychiatry. Critics, colleagues, and friends often refer to the fact that, as a psychiatrist, Santareno was interested in understanding people, which translated to having a deep interest in being in touch with the marginalized people of his own country. They also mention that Santareno wove his literary persona in with his true self. For example, the actress and writer Fernanda Lapa recognized in her friend the coexistence of worldviews, of space and time, and considered him a “great humanist” who oscillated between laughter and depression and presented philosophical and sentimental contradictions (*Conferência Digital À Mesa na ‘Paraíso’*). Reading Santareno as the alter ego of António Martinho, it is possible to see in these contradictions the synthesis of an artist who ostensibly tried to denounce injustice, prejudice, and violence and a man who simply wanted to find balance and live his life without blame or guilt for wanting to be who he was “*Quero realizar-me, ser eu!*” [I want to fulfill myself, be me!]

When I think of Santareno, I associate silence and seriousness with his autobiography and his letters. He also had a deep appreciation for theater, participated in many conferences on the subject and politicized freedom of speech initiatives. Both his plays and his public initiatives can be thought of as noise. He spoke, he wrote, he embodied that noise to crack the silence he was living under.

Santareno’s letters, written between 1944 and 1951 and addressed to Maria Justina Bairrão Oleiro, form a kind of epistolary novel or autobiography (posing formal questions about authorship and privacy); however, they also represent a constellation of the author’s thoughts.

³⁴ In 2020, Portugal celebrated the 100th anniversary of the playwright’s birth with several initiatives. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the scheduled activities, Bernardo Santareno was still recognized, primarily due to the efforts of personalities such as Fernanda Lapa (who passed away in the summer of 2020 while she was directing Santareno’s play *O Punho*) and institutions such as the Escola de Mulheres - Clube Estefânia. The second performance of *O Judeu* took place in Santarém on November 19, 2020. See program here <https://centenariosantareno.blogspot.com/>

There is no information about how the two became close friends, nor does Oleiro's voice ever appear.³⁵ Oleiro's silence is her voice: loud, consequential, robust.

The relationship between Santareno and Oleiro seems to have been one of great trust, at least for Santareno, since he opens up to her often, sharing his struggles and the mundane aspects of his collegiate life.

His romantic life, as it is portrayed in the letters, was full and can be read from several perspectives. One perspective focuses on his supposed struggle with his homosexuality (repressed by the authoritarian regime and portrayed in his plays) since there are references to his girlfriend Arlete as a sister but not a romantic partner. Another perspective is that of biographical reconstruction. Finally, the perspective I find most intriguing is the one that considers Santareno's love for God, evidenced by his willingness to join the seminary.

Oleiro was also an interlocutor with whom he was able to talk about theater and literature more generally. In a letter from 19XX, Santareno mentions their "*negócios teatrais*," [theatrical business] "*começaremos pois por conversar àcerca dos nossos empreendimentos teatrais: somos um autor e uma adaptadora positivamente falidos!...*" [we will therefore begin by talking about our theatrical ventures: we are a positively bankrupt author and adaptor!...] He tells her about the plays he has seen, sends her his first plays, and writes extensively about Federico Garcia Lorca:

"Descobri" um extraordinário artista espanhol; Federico Garcia Lorca. Poeta maravilhoso: Cigano, cantor do sangue e dos cravos rubros, espanholíssimo de Granada (Esp. N21 50-51)

["I discovered" an extraordinary Spanish artist: Federico Garcia Lorca. Wonderful poet: Gypsy, singer of blood and red carnations, Spanishhissimo from Granada]

Santareno also shares his insecurities as a writer:

Duvido tanto de mim, do valor que as minhas coisitas possam ter! No entanto, gostaria de ser artista. Muito. Intérprete de poetas. (Esp. N21/51 4)

[I doubt myself so much, how valuable my little things might be! However, I would like to be an artist. Very much so. Interpreter of poets.]

The letters give us access to his internal drama, struggle, anguish, and depressive states. Santareno often speaks of his feelings of disquiet, anxiety, and especially about his "shadows." At times, his description of the pain he experiences as being like demonic forces inside his body that only the absolute love of God can dispel—"eu não me compreendo, sou um campo de lutas." [I don't understand myself, I am a field of struggle.]—make the reader feel uncomfortably like a voyeur. The feeling of continually living in a kind of war zone is prominent, notably when, in 1951, he shares the following:

³⁵ Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal [National Library of Portugal] has a literary archive with the "espólio" of several authors that researchers can access. In comparison to the archives of other authors, that of Santareno [Esp. N21] is considered to be relatively small. It contains letters addressed to Maria Justina Bairrão Oleiro (written between 1944 and 1951), as well as poems "Oração," "Poema Bravio," "Esperança de Natal," "Inquietação," "Contraste" and the play "Confissão" which were sent to her. It also contains a letter addressed to a priest, "Padre Fernando," as well as the publications *A morte na raiz: poemas* (1954) and *Romance do mar: poemas* (1955) dedicated to Maria Justina Bairrão Oleiro. Finally, one can access the medical school yearbook *Livros dos quartanistas de medicina da Universidade de Coimbra* (1948), inscribed to Maria Justina Bairrão Oleiro. For more material, see http://acpc.bnportugal.gov.pt/colecoes_autores/n21_santareno_bernardo.html. A further study of Santareno's letters could be divided into four categories: the relationship between Martinho (as he always signed his name) and Maria Justina Bairrão Oleiro; the unstable romantic life he describes with Arlete, his lover/girlfriend; the interior drama, struggle, anguish, that he confesses regarding his depressive states; and his religious struggles.

Falta-me tanto para atingir o equilíbrio, aquele equilíbrio alto que me daria paz!...a vida é uma guerra. É de facto. Caminho: trabalho, trabalho, trabalho útil e transformante, confiança em mim, espírito de conquista, de luta. Tenho de matar a dúvida, essa estável (estéril?), aniquilante, dúvida. *Quero realizar-me, ser eu!* (sublinhado de Santareno) (Esp. N21 54)

I still need so much to achieve balance, that lofty balance that would give me peace!...life is a war. It is indeed. Path: work, work, useful and transformative transforming work, confidence in myself, a spirit of conquest, of struggle. I have to kill doubt, that stable (sterile?), annihilating, doubt. I want to fulfill myself, to be me! (emphasis in the original)

The masochistic tone combined with a confession-like form, particularly when referring to his faith and his devotion to God, illustrate Santareno's struggle. His commitment to God is evident. He uses Catholic epistemological terminology, but also refers to his friend as a sister in God. The reader-*cum-voyeur* "believes" in his faith, though at times one gets the sense of deep desire for self-punishment that seems to come from the Catholic epistemological framework. Particularly interesting in this regard are his plays, including *O Judeu*, in which Santareno develops a critique of the Catholic church as an institution. These themes suggest possibilities for further study, in which his letters might be read as a private drama.

There are files under Santareno's birth name—António Martinho do Rosário—in the archives of the Polícia Internacional de Defesa do Estado / Direção Geral de Segurança, the political police of Salazar's regime known as the PIDE/DGS. The archive follows PIDE's original administrative organization and is arranged in folders that refer to two locations (Porto and Coimbra) and to central services. Overall, PIDE seems to have surveilled Santareno often and requested constant information about his political activity. The information in the files includes Santareno's anti-censorship activities (in defense of freedom of speech) as well as his participation in anti-regime, pro-democratic, and leftist organizations (such as Movimento de Unidade Democrática or the Partido Comunista Português). The PIDE files also include reports about Santareno's participation in conferences about theater and other artistic activities. Thus, the citizen António Martinho do Rosário was involved with the intellectual elite in struggling against the political practices of the regime, which might explain why PIDE was continually trying to surveil the initiatives to which he subscribed.

For the 30-year period between 1945 and 1974 during which Santareno produced his work, the critic, playwright, and essayist Rebello has identified two phases with two aesthetic trends. Between 1945 and 1960, Portuguese so-called serious drama oscillated between a social trend and an existential one. The former looked for social change and was somewhat connected with the neorealist movement of authors such as Manuel da Fonseca, Alves Correia, and Romeu Correia whereas the latter, exemplified by Agustina Bessa-Luís, Jorge de Sena, David Mourão Ferreira, and José-Augusto Ferreira, focused on the inquiry into human existence. Between 1960 and 1974, the two main trends were the theater of the absurd, with dramatists such as Manuel Granjeio Crespo, H. Crispa Monteiro, and Jaime Salazar Sampaio, and epic theater following a Brechtian model. The first few references to Brecht in the Portuguese press appeared in 1949 and, although a few articles were written in the following years, it was only from 1955 forward that the Portuguese public had access to French translations published by the French publisher L'Arche Éditeur (Delille 67). Portuguese intellectuals such as Rebello, Ilse Losa, Jorge de Sena, Paulo Quintela, José Redondo Júnior, Mário Vilaça contributed to the further dissemination of Brecht's work in Portugal between the late 1950s and the late 1960s, despite the fact their plays

were banned by regime (which caused frustration for many who wished to stage Brecht's plays and fought for the right to do so).³⁶ The Salazarist ban on Brecht's work and corresponding official efforts to make it invisible were successful on many levels, but they did not stop his ideas from reaching an audience. Indeed, these ideas continued to spread, and Brecht became a pivotal reference among Portuguese leftist intellectuals such as Santareno who continued to produce translations, criticism, and Brechtian dramatic productions. According to Rebello, Santareno

evoluiu de uma dramaturgia que adopta as estruturas do naturalismo para as aplicar ao serviço de temas de raiz popular interligados com as grandes preocupações que agitam a carne e o espírito do homem de hoje (a dúvida religiosa, as desigualdades e injustiças sociais, a frustração e o recalçamento sexual), para uma dramaturgia de sinal épico, deliberadamente interveniente no processo histórico em curso. (*História* 142)

[evolved from a dramaturgy that adopts the structures of naturalism to apply them to the service of themes with popular roots intertwined with the great concerns that agitate the flesh and spirit of man today (religious doubt, social inequalities and injustices, frustration and sexual recalcitrance), to an epic dramaturgy, deliberately intervening in the ongoing historical process.]

Although Santareno wrote poetry and, in the 1950s, also experimented with prose (*Nos Mares do Fim do Mundo*, 1959), his passion was theater. As a dramatist, Santareno's style would later be considered difficult, if not impossible, to label. In 1957, he published his first "trio" of plays: *A Promessa*, [The Promise], *O Bailarino* [The Dancer], and *A Excomungada* [The Excommunicated]. In 1959 followed *O Crime da Aldeia Velha: peça em 3 actos* [The Old Village Crime: a play in 3 acts] and *O Luge* [The Luger].³⁷ One year later, he published *António Marinheiro: O Édipo de Alfama* [António Marinheiro: The Oedipus of Alfama] and in 1961 *Os Anjos e o Sangue* [The Angels and the Blood], *O Duelo* [The Duel], and *O Pecado de João Agonia* [The Sin of John Agony]. Finally, in 1962 the playwright published *Anunciação* [Annunciation]. These plays are as part of an aesthetic trend that weaves social intervention and existentialism together with the creative potentialities of popular culture. In the second half of the 1960s, after a few years without publishing, Santareno initiated what critics have traditionally referred to as a more politicized cycle, inspired by epic techniques: *O Judeu* [The Jew] (1966), *O Inferno* [Hell] (1967), and *A Traição do Padre Martinho* [The Betrayal of Father Martin] (1969). The sixties were, in fact, a critical decade for Santareno, not only as a dramatist but also as a public intellectual who criticized the violence of the authoritarian regime. Though always somewhat discreet, Santareno's political action was tracked by the political police (PIDE), as

³⁶ As Delille reminds us, the only time a Brecht's play was officially performed before the end of the dictatorship was in March of 1960 when the Brazilian company Maria Della Costa presented the play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* [The Good Person of Szechwan] at *Teatro Capitólio* in Lisbon. The enactment resulted in various incidents between the audience and the press and after five more performances the play was banned by the regime (70). In addition to this enactment, there were amateur groups that experimented with poems and plays of Brecht in universities, high schools and other spaces before the Carnation revolution.

³⁷ *O Luge*, together with *Nos Mares do Fim do Mundo*, is considered the "result" of António Martinho do Rosário's experience as a doctor during various trips in "frotas de bacalhoeiros," boats used in cod fishing, which was subsidized by the Salazar regime. Cod fishing was a revered activity and the fishermen national heroes, a narrative promoted by the dictatorship. Santareno's experience is known to have been a milestone for the documentation of the daily life of Portuguese working fishermen in Greenland. He was one of the first literary voices to document the hardship and contradictions of these "national heroes," questioning a mythology that at the time already had international visibility. Rudyard Kipling's novel *Captains Courageous* (1897), featuring a Portuguese fisherman in the North Atlantic, is an important first contribution to the mythology surrounding Portuguese fishermen.

mentioned above. The Portuguese National Archive—*Torre do Tombo*—also contains information filed under his birth name and under his pseudonym, including some photographs. In 1974, frustrated by the fact that his plays were being censored, Santareno wrote the play *Português, Escritor, quarenta e cinco anos de idade* [Portuguese, Writer, aged forty-five], thinking that it would be his last one. The regime ended, however, and after the revolution, in 1979, Santareno wrote the plays *Os Marginais e a Revolução: Restos* [The Marginals and the Revolution: Remnants], *A Confissão* [The Confession], *Monsanto, Vida Breve em Três Fotografias* [Brief Life in Three Photographs] and, in 1987, *O Punho* [The Fist] (published posthumously). Santareno would still collaborate with Ary Santos, César de Oliveira, and Rogério Bracinha on a *revista* titled *P'ra Trás Mija a Burra* [The Donkey Pisses Backwards] which premiered on May 31, 1975, in Teatro ABC in Lisbon. After Santareno's death, some of his work would be adapted to TV and cinema and performed in various theatrical venues in Portugal in addition to being translated. In 1994, a collection of Santareno's dramatic oeuvre was published—including eight one act plays (*Dramaturgia de Abril: 8 peças em 1 Acto*) [Dramaturgy of April: 8 Plays in 1 Act]. After the playwright's death, several editions of his plays, as well as literary criticism, were published. The main criticism that surrounds his work, particularly the play *O Judeu*, seems to be connected to its being chosen to become part of the Portuguese national education system (the play was mandatory reading for high school students). It can be considered his most popular/successful play, however, judging by the number of editions, which is greater than for any of his other plays.

The plot of *O Judeu*, set in the eighteenth century, centers on the historical figure of the Luso-Brazilian dramatist António José da Silva Coutinho, known as “the Jew.” The son of Jews who migrated to colonial Brazil to escape the Inquisition, Da Silva was persecuted in Portugal, accused of practicing the Jewish religion. During the action of the play, Da Silva's fear is transformed into subversion through his activity as the author and director of comedies, operas, and marionette theater in Lisbon. The play—or dramatic narrative³⁸—depicts the violence practiced against the Jewish people, but it does so through a kind of alchemical fusion of historiographic metafiction, epic theater techniques, and Aristotelian dramatic guidelines. Also featured is the historical figure of Cavaleiro de Oliveira, who acts as narrator and commentator on the events of play.

Because *O Judeu* was written, and subsequently censored (banned), during the dictatorship, my analysis primarily involves a close reading of the script.³⁹ Unfortunately, there are no documents or reports about the censorship of *O Judeu*. However, there is a copy of the book in print with sections highlighted in red and blue, I assume by the censors. Most critics have focused on the allegorical aspect of the play (with the Inquisition being a metonym for the repressive tools used by the dictatorship) as well as on its categorization as a historical drama that employs Brechtian techniques. In my analysis, I also read *O Judeu* in the light of several literary strategies, including the use of narrative and “play(s) within the play,” which are also attributes of Brecht's epic theater. focus in particular on “the play(s) within the play” to investigate the relationship between laughter and state repression such as the Inquisition and the dictatorship. Since the play was censored, my analysis of laughter cannot be based on reception analysis. Rather, I focus on the crowd represented within the play. The various calls for violence

³⁸ Aware of the censorship mechanisms to which he was subject, Santareno gives the play long and detailed rubrics, imprinting the text with a narrative force that we do not find in any of his other works, as well as guaranteeing that it is not misrepresented by any institutional or artistic authority (particularly in terms of staging).

³⁹ The play was only performed in 1981, seven years after the regime ended.

against the Jews from members of the crown are accompanied by Dionysian laughter, which I argue functions as a distancing technique. By this I mean that even though Santareno's play is not comical or funny, the scenes in which the characters laugh at the expense of Jews' oppression create critical distance. Additionally, I look at Santareno's representation of Da Silva as a *comediógrafo*, reading it as another example of how popular theater, farce, and comedy worked as spaces of critique.

Overall, this chapter helps explain the historical censorship of Portuguese theater and identifies the relevance of what I call the *laughing body*—a body that can express a full range of emotions and sensory experiences. While existing scholarship on political and social repression provides a comprehensive analysis of censorship in theater, this chapter is intended to contribute to one of the aims of this dissertation: to challenge the traditional division between “serious” and “non-serious” theater in Portugal during most of the twentieth century. Moreover, by looking at laughter as a distancing technique used in Portuguese Marxist-oriented theater, I hope this chapter will contribute to a discussion about laughter and seriousness as “two sides of the same coin,” and not separate, unidimensional concepts, the relationship between them as one of dialectical motion, even when laughter appears only in the form of brief comical interludes.

The remainder of the chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I explore the way in which the *laughing body* of a crowd represented *within* a tragic play works as a distancing technique, potentially promoting critical thinking among the play's audience. By *laughing body*, I mean the rhetorical expressions of laughter presented within the play that challenge the sensorial experience of the theatergoers, particularly in a time of political and social repression. I begin by showing how the dramatic robustness of the *autos-da-fé* scenes gives the play a serious tone, particularly in Act 1. The attitudes of the authority figures toward the condemned and the narration of the ritual and commentary provided by Cavaleiro de Oliveira reinforce the gravity of the ritual. In contrast, when the characters representing the crowd laugh at the Jews' suffering, it creates a Brechtian distancing effect, eliciting a critical reaction from the audience. Therefore, I analyze laughter not as a physiological reaction or one exclusively contingent upon humorous objects, but as a rhetorical and dialectical device that, in the theatrical context, operates as a distancing technique, keeping the audience/reader of *O Judeu* from fully identifying with the characters/plot/events and maintaining their critical distance as observers. In the second section, I focus on Da Silva as a character-dramatist in the play *O Judeu*. I look at how the representation of Da Silva's plays within the play and the accompanying metatheatrical reflection convey Santareno's effort to unravel the significance of theater as a *laughing space* and a privileged form of communication and critique. I argue that the excerpts from Da Silva's operas function as comic interludes promoting a “laughter of hope” (McDowell) and creating a further distancing effect that is meant to inspire social change. To accomplish this, Santareno chooses the playful genre of puppet theater. As a genre that mocks public power and whose actors were typically insulted and marginalized, puppet theatre was an ideal choice to speak to the masses. In the context of his own theatrical work, where he also gives voice to marginalized groups, Da Silva as a character-dramatist emerges as Santareno's ventriloquist, if not his puppeteer. Both Santareno and Da Silva were targets of state surveillance and scrutiny. However, whereas Santareno had to wait a very long time to have an audience, Da Silva was able to present his works to an audience that laughed intensely.

Laughing Body

Having introduced some elements of Santareno's biography and the context in which *O Judeu* was produced, I will now engage with the dialogical relation between form and content in the play at a time when Portuguese censorship scrutinized the performances of Santareno's works. In this section I will look at the ways in which Santareno produced a dramatic narrative that sets an example for how the *laughing body* can occupy an epistemological space inhabited by both seriousness and laughter.

Divided into three acts, the play revolves around the eighteenth-century historical and literary figure Da Silva. The fragmented organization of the drama is juxtaposed with the presence of a narrator who guides the reader/spectator throughout the three acts. The first act follows Da Silva's youthful days through the lens of the Inquisitorial process that both he and his mother are subjected to. The act alternates between Inquisitorial rituals and the narrator's comments and sets the tone for the tragic destiny the main character will face. The second act follows Da Silva as he graduates from law school, marries Leonor, and becomes a famous playwright. In this act, Santareno includes scenes from some of Da Silva's own plays. In the third act, Da Silva is once again a target of the Inquisition. The reader/spectator can deduce that Da Silva's condemnation occurred as a result of his supposed religious practices and his practice as a playwright.

Among critics, there is a consensus around the idea that *O Judeu* is one of the most important works produced by Santareno. On the one hand, the play establishes a metonymic connection between two historical periods—the eighteenth-century Inquisition and the twentieth-century dictatorship—including several characters that are identifiable as historical figures. On the other hand, the play marks the beginning of the author's interventionist social theater. Many critics feel that the play was not written to be performed but to be read due to the fact that it poses challenges for a theater director when it comes to staging it, which might explain the greater number of editions compared to his other plays. The stage directions are lengthy and very detailed. As a reader, the effect is particularly intriguing because it is almost as if one becomes simultaneously actor and spectator as one imagines the scenario, locating oneself within the time and space of the play.

The play's title *O Judeu - Narrativa em Três Actos* [The Jew - Narrative in Three Acts] underscores the significance of "the Jew" in his context and the fact that the play follows a narrative line, making use of long narrative descriptions (as opposed to dialogue between characters). The title evokes Da Silva, known as "the Jew," and invites the twentieth-century reader to expect a work about a historical figure (as a Jew and as a playwright) and possibly about the historical violence inflicted on the Jewish community, namely by the Inquisition and the Holocaust. With the subtitle, "*Narrativa em Três Actos*" [Narrative in Three Acts], Santareno guides the reader not only to expect the script content to include a narrative description of the particular time and space it depicts but also to expect a dramatic structure.

O Judeu presents a large number of characters and a fragmented structure and, together with the character of Da Silva and the narrator Cavaleiro de Oliveira, it weaves a sharp critique of Portuguese society in the eighteenth-century from a twentieth-century perspective. Cavaleiro de Oliveira, or Francisco Xavier de Oliveira, was an important eighteenth-century historical figure, a Protestant diplomat and author of a significant work critiquing Portuguese institutions,

namely the Inquisition.⁴⁰ Known as a free thinker who often looked at Portugal “from afar,” his critical eye was tempered by his deep appreciation for the people of Portugal. In the play, while Da Silva has the leading role as the dramatist who suffers the violence of the Inquisition, Cavaleiro de Oliveira guides the spectator using long, descriptive, convincing, and robust narrations. The play also introduces several other characters who are important, such as Da Silva’s mother, Lourença Coutinho, who sets the tone for the violence suffered by Jews in the eighteenth century and, metonymically, all groups marginalized by the Portuguese dictatorship. The inquisitors and the king are also crucial characters, as they represent (and are responsible for) the violence that is central to the play.

When breaking down the play, it is somewhat challenging to identify coherent, chronological transitions between scenes, even though the stage directions (which include details on everything from décor to sound effects/audio) are very detailed and contribute to the narration of the events. The actions are fragmented, and the narrator-commentator often interrupts the scenes. At times, the narrator comments at the end of the scene, at other times in the middle. While there is a certain temporal ambiguity, it is possible to identify a span of thirteen years as the chronological time covered. However, the narrative temporality is also determined by the existence of a narrator who presents past actions as well as projections into the future through analepses and prolepses (Cabral 38). The play is set in Lisbon, even though the narrator’s comments take the audience to other places. The locations in the city vary from the sites of the Inquisition’s *autos-da-fé* to Da Silva’s house to the *Teatro do Bairro Alto*. The decor and set descriptions are often detailed and, as previously mentioned, the stage directions are usually longer than the dialogue. Following the same logic, Santareno gives the director all the information about the details that compose the characters, including their emotional state and costumes. Regarding sounds, several directions that refer to laughter, screaming, and all the sounds coming from the *coro* [chorus]. For example, in Act 3 the audience can hear the ticking of a clock when the inquisitors arrive at Da Silva’s house to interrogate him and eventually to condemn him to die. Several interpretations of this sound are possible: it could be seen as a countdown to the protagonist’s death or as signaling an imminent tragic ending.

I have mentioned that *O Judeu* foregrounds elements of a tragedy, including climax, pathos, and catharsis, among others. However, it also uses prose; offers a politicized critique of political persecution, intolerance, and manipulation of the people; and includes comic and burlesque elements, notably the excerpts from Da Silva plays (Cabral 41). While the play displays a commitment to Aristotelian guidelines for tragedy, its epic perspective as a historical drama allows the audience to read the present through a non-censored version of the past.

In the play, the use of the Inquisition as a metonym for the authoritarian regime is easily identified through the “marriage” between the Inquisition and the monarchy, or the “*Real Governança da Nação, (...) uma à outra unidas, como a Esposa ao Esposo amado!*” [Royal Governance of the Nation, (...) one to the other united, as the Bride to the beloved Bridegroom!] (Santareno, *O Judeu* 17). This simile evokes the closeness between Salazar’s regime and the Catholic Church, with the figure of the Inquisitor representing Cardinal Cerejeira and the solemnity of the Inquisition representing the public ceremonies of the Catholic Church during the dictatorship.

⁴⁰ Important works are *Memoires de Portugal: avec la bibliotheque lusitane* (1741), *Cartas Familiares, Históricas, Políticas e Críticas: Discursos Sérios e Jocosos* (1741- 1742), and *Opúsculos contra o Santo Officio* (1942). Some of his works include other themes such as love and madness and can be found in *Amusement Périodique* (1751).

The play's seriousness tone is set in the first act with the dramatic robustness of the *auto-da-fé* scenes. *Autos-da-fé* were public ceremonies carefully organized by the Inquisition where those considered heretics or apostates were condemned. Typically, the ritual started with a sermon followed by a public procession, the reading of the sentences, and the punishment. During the reign of D. João V, *autos-da-fé* were a demonstration of the power of the church as much as that of the king; they took the form of contours of a spectacle which everybody was welcome to attend. Death by burning constituted the ultimate penalty. Spectators were encouraged to participate under the argument that their presence and support would contribute toward their own redemption and salvation. Nevertheless, their participation and behavior were often driven by prejudice, malice, indoctrination, or revolt against people's impoverishment and exploitation.

The attitudes of the authority figures toward the condemned and Cavaleiro de Oliveira's narration of and commentary on the ritual reinforce the gravity of the ceremony. In contrast, the reactions of the crowd calling for violence against the Jews in a Dionysian way create 'critical distance in laughter', by which I mean the embodiment of laughter by the characters as a Brechtian distancing technique employed to provoke a critical reaction from the audience.

The sermon that opens Act I of *O Judeu* sets the tone of the play. It starts with "padre pregador" [preacher priest] preaching to the people as if they were his assistants in the *auto-da-fé*. The priest evokes Jews as a "raça maldita" [cursed race], likening them to poisonous snakes. He also accuses converted Jews, "cristãos novos" [new Christians], of committing crimes against Jesus Christ. He then presents the Holy Inquisition as the remedy for the Jews' heresy:

PADRE PREGADOR: E assim como permite o mal, nos dá a mezinha: O Santo Ofício, o Santo Tribunal da Inquisição! Cárcere, potro, polé, excomunhão, confisco de bens materiais...a fogueira!, eis os remédios benditos da sua panaceia salvadora: Ai, irmãos, quantas almas terão sido limpas da lepra herética com esta santa botica? Quantas terão sido salvas para a Eternidade?!...Como a madre amantíssima embala em seus braços o filhinho doente, com ele sofrendo o destempero das febres ruins, com ele saboreando o azedo das ervas curandeiras, assim a Santa Inquisição embala os míseros hereges; assim, com desvelado zelo na esperança curtido, lhes trata da saúde da alma! (Santareno, *O Judeu* 15)

[PREACHER PRIEST: And just as it allows evil, it gives us the cure: The Holy Office, the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition! Imprisonment, colt, cane, excommunication, confiscation of material goods... the fire!, these are the blessed remedies of its saving panacea: Oh, brothers, how many souls have been cleansed from heretical leprosy with this holy apothecary? How many have been saved for Eternity? As the most loving mother cradles her sick child in her arms, with him suffering the distemper of the bad fevers, with him tasting the sour of the healing herbs, so the Holy Inquisition cradles the wretched heretics; so, with devout zeal in the hope of healing, it treats the health of their souls!]

Although the sermon is a critical component of the play, it is the act as a whole that plunges the spectator into the deep waters of the Inquisition's violence. The reader/spectator is confronted with multiple scenes of *autos-de-fé* where inquisitors and the population condemn Jews and seek violent "remedies." The author's directions also provide access to the emotions, gestures, rituals, and feelings of the characters being condemned. Two elements give the *autos-de-fé* their

dramatic robustness and serious tone: 1) the attitudes of the authority figures toward the condemned, including Da Silva and his mother; and 2) the narration of and commentary on the ritual by Cavaleiro de Oliveira.

Authority Figures

The attitudes of authority figures in *O Judeu* toward Da Silva and his mother are significant. It is noteworthy, however, that officials also accuse and punish three others. Their presence is significant in that it shows that the Portuguese Inquisition was not concerned exclusively with Jews but also with anyone whose choices (or perceived choices) questioned Catholic values or the institution of the Church itself.

The first of the accused is António Pereira de Sá, a 45-year-old man charged with practicing Lutheranism on April 19, 1716. He is imprisoned and his property is confiscated. The second is José Lavareda, a 30-year-old *cristão-novo* [new Christian] and goldsmith accused of practicing Judaism.⁴¹ He, too, has his property confiscated, but the tribunal also excommunicates him and excludes him from ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The third person accused is a 35-year-old nun, Maria do Rosário, who is said to have had a “pact with the devil” and practiced witchcraft. Her punishment includes a public scourging at the church’s door and perpetual imprisonment within her convent. The fourth and fifth persons accused in Act I of *O Judeu* are Lourença Coutinho and Da Silva. Both Lourença, a 50-year-old *cristão-novo*, and Da Silva, her 21-year-old son and a law student in Coimbra, are accused of practicing Judaism. In an interrogation scene, Inquisition officials accuse Lourença and Da Silva of following the Law of Moses. Da Silva experiences especially difficult times while in custody and is released under the premise that he will be indoctrinated into the Catholic faith. At this point in the play, the Inquisition proceedings become a spectacle, with a crowd of spectators thirsty for blood and violence.

The scenes that portray dialogues between the authority figures are significant in terms of showing the power dynamics and social structure of the eighteenth century and offer a reflection on the institutions’ performativity. Cavaleiro de Oliveira witnesses the scenes and analyzes Portuguese society by invoking the historical figure of Alexandre de Gusmão—a Brazilian diplomat and *um homem das luzes* [a man of the Enlightenment] (64). De Gusmão’s critique of Portugal included the lack of industry and trade, and the agricultural underdevelopment of the country, caused by what he called a “hermaphrodite government.” De Gusmão also criticized the fact that the more educated Portuguese men migrated to Brazil in search of gold and diamonds, leaving fewer people to work the land, which resulted in agricultural underdevelopment. This underdevelopment then led to the import of essential goods such as olive oil and wheat and contributed to the poverty, poor health, persecution, and death of poorer citizens:

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: De sobejo apenas o vinho, o qual traz o povo contente, vivendo no sonho das bebedeiras e que a realidade teima em lhe negar. (...) Com que cara pode El-Rei exigir do povo que dê a vida, nas guerras, para defender e garantir Portugal? Defender o quê, se ao povo nada pertence, salvo a fome, a doença, a perseguição...e a morte que, esta sim, está segura e certa?! Pois há-de obrigar-se o povo miúdo a lutar e morrer para que restem unos e indivisos bens... dos quais nem em

⁴¹ “New Christian” is a term coined by the Portuguese and the Spanish to refer to the social category of Sephardic and Bene Israel Jews, as well as Muslims, who converted to Catholicism. Other nomenclature includes *marrano* or *converso*.

diminuta porção ele participa? Para defender aqueles mesmos ideais que lhe mantêm as cadeias nos pés e nas mãos?! (64-5)

[CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: The only thing surplus is the wine, which makes the people happy, living in the dream of drunkenness that reality insists on denying them. (...) How can the King demand from the people to give their lives in war to defend and guarantee Portugal? Defend what, if nothing belongs to the people, except hunger, disease, persecution ... and death, which is assured and certain?! Why must the little people be forced to fight and die so that only one and indivisible property remains... of which they don't even have a tiny part? To defend those same ideals that keep chains on his feet and hands?!]

The stage directions guide the reader/audience through the performativity of the kingdom and of the Inquisition. Santareno indicates the coexistence of two scenarios on stage: The first is the king's private room in the presence of King D. João V's himself and his secretary Diogo de Mendonça Corte Real. The king's room is brightly lit and decorated in Baroque splendor; the second is the private room of Cardeal da Mota and the Grand Inquisitor, which is austere, silent, and dark.

The latter scenario includes a dialogue between the 2nd Inquisitor, the 1st Inquisitor, and the Grand Inquisitor. They begin by talking about the condemned who have been denounced and jailed, and then discuss the nature of fear. When the 1st Inquisitor expresses his lack of vocation to impose fear, the Grand Inquisitor argues that fear is imperative to "fight sin." The 1st Inquisitor insists on the fact that the Inquisition has killed many innocent men, and cites this as a reason why he struggles to perform his duties:

1º INQUISIDOR: Cumpro na contradição, na desordem, em luta! Todos os dias, em cada hora, penso...sinto que o Santo Ofício não é, não pode ser!, fruto da vontade de Jesus Cristo, Nosso Senhor. Que...que o Tribunal da Inquisição tem condenado à fogueira muitos homens inocentes de obras, ou sequer pensamentos heresiarcas...Inocentes, Reverendo Padre! (70-1)

[1st INQUISITOR: I serve in contradiction, in disorder, in struggle! Every day, every hour, I think... I feel that the Holy Office is not, cannot be!, the fruit of the will of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. That...that the Tribunal of the Inquisition has condemned to the stake many men innocent of heretical works, or even heretical thoughts...Innocent, Reverend Father!]

The Grand Inquisitor's reaction to observation of the 1st Inquisitor shows the violence of the Inquisition's indoctrination. The Grand Inquisitor reveals his deep love for *autos-da-fé* and his appreciation of fear. He explains that only fear can save men from the demon and that inquisitors are knights of fear—part of a "fear army."

INQUISIDOR-MOR: Eu amo e desejo os Autos-da-fé. Desejo-os com todas as potências do meu coração e da minha consciência! Os Autos-da-fé, os queimadeiros, são o reflexo, ainda que pálido e distante, da face irada de Deus! São gritos vitoriosos da Justiça conspurcada, amostras aparentes de quanto pode o inquisitorial exército, espectáculos do Medo! Crê, Diogo, que só o medo tem poder para arrancar o Homem dos braços malditos do Demónio. (...) Medo, Diogo. Tu és Inquisidor, um cavaleiro do Medo. (71)

[CHIEF INQUISITOR: I love and desire the autos-da-fé. I desire them with all the power of my heart and of my conscience! The autos-da-fé, the burnings,

are the reflection, even if pale and distant, of the wrathful face of God! They are the victorious shouts of polluted Justice, apparent samples of how much the inquisitorial army can do, spectacles of Fear! Believe, Diogo, that only fear has the power to snatch Man out of the cursed arms of the Devil. (...) Fear, Diogo. You are [an] Inquisitor, a knight of Fear.]

Even though the Grand Inquisitor presents his arguments and manipulates the 1st Inquisitor to accept his duty and calling, saying that he does not trust the 2nd Inquisitor, the 1st Inquisitor still expresses guilt for having refused to release Da Silva:

1º INQUISIDOR: (...) O Santo Ofício estragou-o, cobriu-lhe com os crepes do medo todo o juvenil impulso, mudou-o num mísero animal acochado, de todos fugidio...! (*Violento:*) Fomos nós, foi a Santa Inquisição, fui *eu!!* E ele está inocente. (72-3)

[1st INQUISITOR: (...) The Holy Office ruined him, covered all his youthful impulse with the crepe of fear, changed him into a miserable, harassed animal, fleeing from everyone...! (*Violent:*) It was us, it was the Holy Inquisition, it was me! And he is innocent.]

The scenes that show the rhetoric of fear defended by the Grand Inquisitor are meaningful since they demonstrate the inner contradiction between Catholic values, or at least the life of Jesus Christ, and the Inquisition as an institution. Act I ends with a procession of a public *auto-da-fé* in Lisbon (with penitents) followed by a dialogue between the king, the cardinal, and Diogo de Mendonça. In the scene, the stage directions and the king's words project the kingdom's ostentation:

REI: O Reino de Portugal, no conceito de todas as nações do mundo civilizado, é, e sempre terá de ser, o primeiro e mais exemplar, o primogénito da Cristandade!!! (85)

[KING: The Kingdom of Portugal, in the concept of all the nations of the civilized world, is, and always will be, the first and most exemplary, the firstborn of Christendom!!!]

The scene ends with the people calling for the heretics' death, followed by the Inquisition anthem, denoting the strength and robustness of the institution.

Cavaleiro de Oliveira as a Commentator

The narration and sociological analysis provided by Cavaleiro de Oliveira is an extremely pivotal aspect of the play. He introduces himself as a noble diplomat and womanizer, a short and rebellious man exiled to London because of his conversion to Protestantism. De Oliveira tells the audience that he is a minor professional writer, and he comments on the various scenes depicted in the play. His first intervention is relevant as it provides a political and sociological account of Portuguese society in the eighteenth century, which can also serve as a metonym for the political and social context in which Santareno was writing the play. De Oliveira identifies Portugal's backwardness as being caused by the malice and perversion of its rulers. The solution he presents is the extinction of the Inquisition:

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: É preciso resgatar os portugueses do jugo nefando do Santo-Ofício. Vai nisso a salvação do reino, pois que ciências e artes a par e passo do progresso, civilidade e civilização, um comércio próspero, uma autoridade cônica das suas funções, uma religião purgada de

idolatria, enfim, portugueses ilustrados e conscientes, não poderá haver enquanto perdure a monstruosa jurisdição!” (37)

[CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: It is necessary to rescue the Portuguese from the nefarious yoke of the Holy Office. In this lies the salvation of the kingdom because sciences and arts at the same pace of progress, civility and civilization, a prosperous commerce, an authority aware of its functions, a religion purged of idolatry, in short, educated and conscious Portuguese there cannot be while the monstrous jurisdiction persists!”]

For Cavaleiro de Oliveira, the Inquisition is responsible for the lack of progress and development of new ideas, such as those promoted by the Enlightenment. Another critical detail de Oliveira mentions about himself is that he is an exile—“*Eu sou um exilado, meus senhores*” [I am an expatriate, gentlemen] (38)—not only because the Inquisition persecuted him but also because he represented the men of letters who were able to develop a critique of the country’s social and political life.

De Oliveira’s comments alternate with scenes from the Inquisitorial performance around Lourença Coutinho and Da Silva’s condemnation. In one scene, Da Silva’s mother and Escrava Negra [black slave] observe his pain in an instance of double witnessing (the spectator/reader witnesses them witnessing him). It is a scene of excruciating suffering (“*grito de dor*”) for Da Silva, which contrasts sharply with the crowd’s laughter (“*gargalhadas do público*”). In his first line, Da Silva, angry and tearful, blames his mother for his suffering, accuses his family of being “imunda” [filthy], and criticizes the slave for being a servant of a filthy family:

DA SILVA: A última, a mais reles das degradações! Não temos sido justos contigo, negra: Qualquer dia vendo-te a um branco...um branco de sangue limpo, um familiar do Santo Ofício! (...) Lepra da cor... lepra do sangue: somos intocáveis, eu e tu, negra! Mais ainda eu, cão de Israel; mais a senhora, mãe...Mãe...?! (40-41)

[DA SILVA: The last, the vilest of degradations! We have not been fair to you, black woman: Any day I’ll sell you to a white man...a clean-blooded white man, a relative of the Holy Office! (...) Leprosy of color... leprosy of the blood: we are untouchable, you and I, black! Plus me, dog of Israel; plus you, mother...Mother...?!]

The character denigrates himself and his family and, at the same time, projects the prejudice and violence against the Jews onto a black slave. Observing the scene, Cavaleiro de Oliveira intervenes, expressing disgust for Da Silva’s condemnation “*feito exemplo de escárnio*” [made a mockery], and confesses that he, himself, had abandoned Catholicism. He also addresses the Portuguese living in the twentieth century, which we can arguably see as a direct call to Santareno’s audience. He is interrupted, however, by the crowd’s calls for violence and the black slave’s howling cry:

(*Neste momento, a fala do Cavaleiro é interrompida por uma grande gargalhada coletiva foguejada de ódio e escárnio.*) [At this point, the Knight’s speech is interrupted by a great collective roaring laugh of hatred and derision.] (42)

After the crowd flees (to escape the guards), Cavaleiro de Oliveira resumes his critique of the inequality in the country, namely within the context of a feudal society divided into the three social orders: the nobles, the clergy, and the peasants. In particular, he criticizes the people for their inertia and their allegiance to the Catholic Church, once again addressing his future compatriots:

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: Continuará a passear-se assim, entre a santa pobreza e a não menos santa ignorância da arraia pequena, os paramentados braços firme e morosamente apoiados nos grandes da Nação, para maior garantia e mais robusta segurança da Santa Madre Igreja, e prudente salvaguarda do Seu magistério divino?... Respondei-me vós, portugueses do século XX, vós que, para mim, sois sombras fugidias da esperança e do temor! Como será?... (45)

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: Will you continue to walk thus, between the holy poverty and the no less holy ignorance of the little fish, the vested arms firmly and morosely supported by the great ones of the Nation, for the greater guarantee and more robust security of Holy Mother Church and prudent safeguard of Her divine magisterium? Answer me, you Portuguese of the twentieth century, you who, for me, are fleeting shadows of hope and fear! How will it be?

This aside is followed by the first dialogue between Lourença Coutinho and her son Da Silva. The young man talks about the hate of the inquisitors and the people toward Jews. He affirms that he does not understand their hatred and disgust and asks his mother why she let him be born. In response to her son's anguish, Lourença Coutinho recites the Book of Job, which questions innocent people's suffering in the eyes of God. Da Silva firmly states that he does not believe in any god and expresses his fear of death. It is at this moment that Cavaleiro de Oliveira expands his critique of the Inquisition and reveals that he himself had been judged in absentia. Now that I have shown how the attitudes of authority figures toward the condemned, including Da Silva and his mother, and Cavaleiro de Oliveira's critique promote critical thinking, I turn to the reactions of the crowd attending the ritual, which are equally paramount to understanding how these *autos-da-fé* scenes recreate the milieu of the Inquisition.

In the *auto-da-fé* scenes, which include acts of violence against the heretics (such as jailing people and burning them alive), the stage directions provide instructions for the actors who play the watching crowd. Some of the reactions Santareno wants his characters to have include insults and laughs performed like a Dionysiac pageant. As witnesses of *autos-da-fé*, the attending crowd become spectators, appreciative of the fierce performances that constituted the Inquisition's public ritual. They insult and dehumanize the Jewish people using terms such as "cão" [dog] and "porco sujo" [dirty pig], among others and demonize them with insults such as "satanás," [Satan] "fornicador do diabo," [devil's fornicator] "filhos do demônio," [sons of the devil] "cães do diabo," [devil's dog] and "demónios" [demons]. The Jews are further denigrated when the crowd hurls insults like "escarro, excremento dos homens," [spit, excrement of men] and "piolhoso." [lice]. Moreover, the crowd justifies its hate towards the Jews on the basis of their supposed inertia when it comes to working, fighting, or building homes, and their use of resources they have not earned: "enceleiram e açambarcam o pão," "cobram direitos/impostos," "não lavram," "não plantam," "não vão à guerra," "não constroem casas," ["they glean and hoard bread," "collect duties/taxes," "do not plow," "do not plant," "do not go to war," "do not build houses,"] and "vivem da usura, da pele que nos tiram" [live on usury, on the skin they take from us]. Finally, we also see antisemitic rhetoric that "justifies" the people's hate based on the Catholic argument that the Jews killed Jesus Christ. These epithets and demands for "justice" appear as a consequence of the accusations against and public condemnation of the heretics in Act I. I stress the call for "justice" by the crowd, including men, women, children, and students (Da Silva's colleagues in law school), which is particularly evident towards the end of the act

when a chorus of men and women chant “*Morte aos judeus! Aos judeus! Aos judeus!*” [Death to the Jews! To the Jews! To the Jews!] (91).

In addition to the insults and hatred coming from the crowd, Santareno’s stage directions specify that the characters’ laugh be Dionysus-like, in reference to the Greek god Dionysus, who is traditionally and widely known as the god of wine and inebriation, ritual madness and ecstasy, festivity, insanity, and dance, music, and theater. (Bierl 366). The figure of Dionysus is commonly associated with the contradictions of a way of living that can be perceived as a combination of “good” and “bad,” of repression and liberation. In the book chapter “Dionysos in Old Comedy. Staging of Experiments on Myth and Cult,” Anton Bierl analyzes the representations of Dionysus in Old Comedy, arguing that that the latter, “as well as its basic god Dionysos – is based on the carnivalesque” (370). The author continues by identifying the negative and positive Dionysiac elements and values, especially in comedy, that “help to establish the cohesion of the polis and its citizens” (371). What is most striking is the aggressiveness of the negative element in conjunction with what the author calls the “positive side of the comic Dionysian spectrum”:

However, the Dionysiac element, particularly in comedy, represents not only a negative scenario of destabilization and destruction but also positive values that help to establish the cohesion of the polis and its citizens.

Without a doubt, besides all of its playful festivity, the laughter of comedy is aggressive as well. And through his negative dimension, Dionysos is also linked to violence, war, and aggression. Furthermore, the comic genre is characterized by bawdy sexuality, grotesque corporeality, ribald derision, cross-dressing, ὀνομαστικὴ κωμωδεῖν, scatology, tothasmos, iambic directness, inebriety, ecstasy, wild and animalistic behavior, archaic-atavistic chaos, scenarios of the under- and otherworld, phalloi, frolicking dance, masks covering the whole body with distorting features, and much more. The iambos is based on rites of festivals of exception in honor of Demeter and Dionysos as well. On the positive side of the comic Dionysian spectrum are rural idylls, nature, utopias of a golden age, food, sacrifice, wine, festivity, symposium, cheerfulness, blooming vegetation, opulent agriculture, commerce, happy endings, marriage, sex and eroticism, peace and health, choral dance, and beautiful music. In Old Comedy, one side always threatens to collapse into its opposite. Accordingly, the idyllic utopia is bound to become a ‘dystopia,’ with all the Dionysian signs. Comedy thus establishes itself in the oscillating and transformative play of these perspectives. The Dionysian κῶμος, where the citizens reactivate the state of the ‘Betwixt and Between’ characteristic of the epebes, is translated to κῶμ-ᾠδία. In the wild group, the young man does away with all civic norms by beating up everyone, raping, excessively drinking, brawling, and swarming in unrestrained ways. (371)

Although *O Judeu* is not a comedy, Santareno wants the crowd within the play (acting almost like a chorus that comments on the action and directs the audience’s response) to laugh in a manner that corresponds to the negative Dionysian element noted by Bierl. Their laughter, which includes “*gargalhada cruel*,” [cruel laughter] (22) “*riso grosso de mulher*,” [woman’s thick laughter] (23) and “*risada feroz*” [fierce laughter] (24), is an act of hate, reiterating the negative side of the spectrum. Other aspects of this negative dimension include ferocity, bloodthirstiness, and ecstasy, as indicated in the following stage directions:

Homens, Mulheres e Crianças do povo, andrajosos, possessos duma fúria de alegria negra, selvática. Em roda frenética, giram à volta da casa do Judeu. Entre risos ébrios e invectivas ameaçadoras, de quando em quando, um popular mima o gesto de atirar uma pedra contra a casa. (42)

[Men, Women and Children of the people, ragged, possessed by a fury of black, savage joy. In a frenzied circle, they circle around the house of the Jew. Between drunken laughter and threatening invectives, every now and then, a popular person mimics the gesture of throwing a stone against the house.]

While one could argue that the reading public might not be aware of the Dionysian tradition, the narrative features of the script (written to be read since Santareno knew that the play would likely be prohibited by the censorship commission) gives the reader a sense of the energetic frenzy and violence associated with the crowd's behavior.

In any case, there is a parallel between the crowd in the play and the reader (or the audience watching the play once it was staged in the aftermath of the dictatorship) that creates a divide between the spectacle of the Inquisition and the spectacle of the play. The former includes the performative component of the people watching the violence inflicted upon the condemned, their calls for violence against the Jews accompanied by Dionysian laughter, i.e., evil laughs of a bloodthirsty mob (like the representations of the laughter of the Devil himself). In the latter spectacle, laughter appears not as a physiological reaction or one exclusively contingent upon humorous objects, but as a rhetorical and dialectic reaction that promotes critical thinking, thus functioning as a Brechtian distancing technique.

Laughing Spaces

I have argued that the scenes of the Inquisition create a distancing effect through their use of Dionysiac laughter; in contrast, the representations of Da Silva's operas within the play create a similar distancing effect by promoting a "laughter of hope" (McDowell). In this section, I look at these particular scenes as comic interludes where Da Silva the character-*dramatist* shows how *laughing spaces* have the potential to regroup, reshape, and rearticulate the experiences of the audience. As we have seen, the play follows the life of da Silva from his youth (Act I) through adulthood (Act 2), and death (Act 3). One could argue that the Inquisitorial torments the character suffers are crucial to his development. However, I intend to show that it is the historical Da Silva's activity as a playwright and director that motivates the evolution of the character. The play follows a somewhat chronological structure, and there is a circular narrative that begins and ends with Inquisition violence. However, the second act, the "core" of Da Silva's life, shows the theater's strength and the transformative potential of the stage, pointing towards the interruption of linear time in favor of a moment of change. For Santareno, the theater was not the place for a revolution to happen, but rather a space in which to think critically and possibly energize the audience to enact social change:

O Teatro não faz revoluções, mas pode haver um indivíduo que vem ao teatro com uma certa predisposição interior, com uma certa inquietação, que está a fazer uma revisão dos seus valores, do seu critério, do seu ângulo de interpretar a vida. E, muitas vezes, um espetáculo pode consciencializá-lo, pode dar-lhe a resposta para muitas dúvidas, dinamizá-lo para uma determinada acção. Acredito que isto possa acontecer. Portanto, sabendo quais são as necessidades e os problemas do povo português, não trato aqueles que me são mais profundamente intrínsecos e secretos, para me dedicar antes aos que, não me sendo tão íntimos, são mais

necessários. Refiro-me a toda uma problemática de ordem política-social que num país como o nosso tem extrema importância... (*Bernardo* 57)

[Theater doesn't make revolutions, but there may be an individual that comes to the theater with a certain inner predisposition, with a certain restlessness, that is doing a revision of his values, of his criteria, of his angle of interpreting life. And, many times, a show can make them aware, can give them the answer to many doubts, can energize them to take action. I believe this can happen. Therefore, knowing the needs and problems of the Portuguese people, I don't deal with those that are more deeply intrinsic and secret to me, to dedicate myself instead to those that, not being so intimate, are more necessary. I am referring to a whole political and social problem that in a country like ours is extremely important...]

As I mentioned previously, the play introduces Brechtian techniques that facilitate the spectator's emotional alienation from the play, thus promoting social and political reform. The distancing effect is most noticeable in elements such as a long narrative, "historification" (the action happens in a past time with which the viewer can draw parallels with the present), narration (Cavaleiro de Oliveira), and the breakdown of the fourth wall. There are other Brechtian techniques, such as the use of signs or the fragmentation of the play (divided into acts but not into scenes). However, in this section I am interested in the Brechtian use of comedy (and laughter) as a distancing technique. I would argue that the presence of such an effect is identifiable in the "play(s) within the play," whose author, the historical and literary figure Da Silva, becomes a character-dramatist in the context of Santareno's play, inaugurating a comic interlude(s) for Santareno's readers/spectators.

Comic Interludes

In his 1994 dissertation titled "Brecht's Laughter: Humor in the Work of Bertolt Brecht and the Clown-Theater of Karl Valentin," William Stuart McDowell argues that the comic contradiction that characterizes Brecht's work is a technique derived from the clown-theater work of Karl Valentin (2). If one of McDowell's goals is to look at the humor in Brecht's works, another is to look at clown-like elements in Brecht and Valentin's practices.

From the communal experience of carnival to circus clowning and, ultimately, to clown theater, the art form of clowning inhabits a world of mystery. It would seem this mystery is about the truth of highlighting the fragility of the human being. Like a magician, a clown has all the resources, the potential, and the willingness to make illusion seem like reality and reality seem like an illusion. Physicality, but also props, clothes, make up and a stage-like space is all it takes for a clown to exist and make us laugh or cry.⁴² For Brecht, characterization and physical comedy in clowning were probably the most inspiring attributes of Valentin's work. According to McDowell, this can be seen in his one-act plays. McDowell explains that although Brecht worked with and watched many clowns throughout his life, none would have as much of an impact on him as Valentin—or the "*Volksclown*," as Brecht called his dear friend (5-6). A clown *of* the people and *for* the people, Valentin embodied the concept and practice of comic contradiction in his writings, productions and appearances; and, most importantly, he made others laugh (13).

The fact that Valentin was so important for Brecht sheds light on his sense of humor and, consequently, his work. While McDowell explores Valentin's works, as well as Brecht's plays,

⁴² A good example is Brecht's one-act farce *The Wedding* (1919) inspired by Valentin's film, *Karl Valentin's Wedding* (1913).

to identify “what made Brecht laugh” (19), he also points to why Brecht credits Valentin “with having been his primary and most significant teacher, and inspiration for Brecht’s concept of Epic Theater” (19). Though understanding the contribution of clown-like elements is key to understanding epic theater, McDowell begins his first chapter with an analysis of Valentin’s humor of physical contradiction. What is striking is the contrast between physical comedy and verbal comedy, the use of machines for comic effect, and the distinctive clown image that Valentin introduced. By not presenting himself as a classic clown, Valentin, with his physical presence and “effortless” comic persona, “did not need to open his mouth to get his first laugh, for his odd look preceded his first words.” The author stresses Valentin’s ability to convey non-verbal humor “by simply not trying” (55) with the “help” of his own physicality.

Inspired by the clown as a metaphor and making use of elements of clowning, Brecht’s comic writing evolved from comedies such as *A Man’s Man* (1926) to one of his most tragic plays, *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941), where subtle comic elements and a “more physical handling of tragic scenes” changed his “previous approaches to serious drama” (227). Brecht was developing a type of laughter that is audible yet remains no more than a “sophisticated laughter”:

it is a knowing laughter, a laughter that comes from the shared experience of collectively understood cynicism. It lacks the loudness of the roar of watching a circus clown do pratfalls. It is laughter that springs from situations of life and death, both large and small, and it is the dark laughter of the “unreliability of all things, including ourselves. (253)

The inclusion of brief comic moments “in the midst of chaos, desolation, and the business of life” (257), like in *Mother Courage*, while not exclusive to Brecht, is critical to our understanding of the comic interlude. I therefore suggest that the comic interlude provided by the inclusion of passages from Da Silva’s plays in *O Judeu* serves a purpose beyond mere “comic relief.” It creates a distancing effect that:

not only jolts the audience awake, it reminds those awake that they’re here, in a theater, with others who are just now, at this instant, in agreement as to the validity of what just happened on the stage: a moment when audience, actors, playwright and all, are drawn into critical distance, and union, in laughter. It is more than laughter of derision: it is laughter of hope that the contradiction that is being presented on the stage can be remedied, and a better situation created. (293)

As a historical and literary figure, Da Silva is one of the most representative Luso-Brazilian dramatists of the first half of the eighteenth century. Da Silva produced no fewer than eight comedies⁴³ using marionettes (*teatro de bonifrates*) in Teatro do Bairro Alto (in Lisbon) between 1733 and 1737. Born in Brazil in 1705 and descended from a Jewish family, he and his family were repeatedly persecuted by Inquisition under the charge of practicing Judaism. As a young boy, he moved to Portugal with his family, where he would later attend law school, start a family, and begin his short career as a dramatist (*comediógrafo*). On October 16, 1739, the Portuguese Inquisition declared him (and his wife) guilty of “Judaizing” and had him strangled

⁴³Known as operas because of their musical component, Da Silva’s dramatic works include *Vida do Grande D. Quixote de La Mancha e do Gordo Sancho Pança; Esopaida ou Vida de Esopo; Os Encantos de Medeia; Anfitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmena; O Labirinto de Creta; Guerras do Alecrim e Manjerona; As Variedades de Proteu; Precipício de Faetonte* and *El Prodigio de Amarante*. The works are published in *Theatro Comico Portuguez, Ou Collecção Das Operas Portuguezas, Que Se Representaraõ Na Casa Do Theatro Publico Do Bairro Alto De Lisboa...*, which can be accessed in the National Library of Portugal’s digital collection at <https://Purl.Pt/12184>.

to death and his body burned. Authors such as Camilo Castelo Branco (who wrote the novel *O Judeu*, 1866), Santareno, and film directors such as the Brazilian Jom Tob Azulay (who directed the film *O Judeu* in 1996) have all contributed to creating the heroic image of Da Silva as a martyr (Chartier 169). Critics and writers have debated whether the dramatist's work reflects the persecution and social injustice he suffered. While the subversive nature of his work is debatable, scholars seem to agree that it belongs to the theatrical tradition of comedy (with implicit and explicit satire/critique) that ultimately had the goal of making people laugh.

In Santareno's play, Da Silva oscillates between character-*protagonist* and character-*dramatist*. The intricate and fragmented coexistence of these is seen particularly in Acts 2 and 3. As the plot develops, Da Silva—as the character-*protagonist*—evolves from a fearful young man accused of “Judaizing” to a fearless man conscious of the injustices surrounding him. Da Silva's activity as the author of comedies/operas in Teatro do Bairro Alto anticipates a possible redemption from the fearful context of eighteenth-century Portuguese society. The most transformative moment follows the effect of strangeness (epic theater) created by his mother, prophetic dream, in which she sees the Jewish extermination camps during the Holocaust. Faced with this vision, Da Silva affirms that the most important thing is the fact that he is a Jew, even if he does not have faith. It is, in fact, singular that he says “*Já não tenho medo!, não tenho fé mas aceito-o sem medo*” [I am no longer afraid!, I have no faith but I accept it without fear] (Santareno, *O Judeu* 140), as he declares himself the king of Bairro Alto theater: “*Sou o Judeu, rei do teatro do Bairro Alto*” [I am the Jew, king of the Bairro Alto theater] (140).

The play includes excerpts from Da Silva's works that function as “plays within a play” and it is the narrator-commentator Cavaleiro de Oliveira who introduces us to Da Silva as a character-*dramatist*, pointing out the reactions of his audience. Oliveira comments on the premiere of Da Silva's opera *Vida do Grande D. Quixote de La Mancha e do Gordo Sancho Pança* (an adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quijote de la Mancha*), giving the reader/spectator of *O Judeu* an idea of Da Silva's success, which, according to Oliveira, can be measured by the amount of laughter provoked in the audience. The presentation of the opera includes two scenes, interrupted by Cavaleiro de Oliveira's comments. The first scene is a dialogue between the characters Apolo, “Poetas,” D. Quixote, and Sancho in which they discuss poetic conventions.⁴⁴ The second scene, set on the *Ilha dos Lagartos* [Island of the Lizards], presents dialogues critiquing the autocratic nature of power. Both scenes can easily provoke a reaction of laughter from the reader/spectator of.

The first scene can be interpreted as a critique of Arcádia Lusitana,⁴⁵ a literary society that attempted to reform the Baroque with characteristics that, for an “*estrangeirado*” such as Cavaleiro de Oliveira, were “*verdadeiramente convencionais e estéreis, secos e ocos...*” [...truly conventional and sterile, dry and hollow...] (125).⁴⁶ The aesthetic poetic conventions being satirized tell us that Santareno, like Da Silva, was invested in criticizing the conventionalism and traditionalism to which some Portuguese writers subscribed, most likely with vested interests in the regime.

⁴⁴ The intertextuality in this scene is not only with *Don Quijote* but also with Cervantes' poetic work *Viaje del Parnaso*, published in 1614.

⁴⁵ Arcádia Lusitana was an eighteenth Portuguese literary society that sought to return to the aesthetics of Classicism. Some of the names associated with the society are Correia Garção and Cruz e Silva.

⁴⁶ The term *estrangeirado* refers to Portuguese intellectuals who were extremely critical of Portugal and cultivated ideas coming from foreign spaces in the 17th and 18th centuries, notably those of the Enlightenment. Some examples include Luís da Cunha, Alexandre de Gusmão, Luís António Verney, and Francisco Xavier de Oliveira (“Cavaleiro de Oliveira” in the play).

The second scene in which Da Silva appears as a character-dramatist depicts Sancho as a governor who shows no empathy, consideration, or democratic spirit towards his people. On the contrary, Sancho is autocratic and does what he pleases, which is confirmed by a sarcastic comment from the narrator: “*Ai de quem nesta Ilha dos Lagartos, não dê vivas ao Grande Governador...! (...) Viva o Grande governador da Ilha dos Lagartos!*” [Woe betide anyone on this Island of Lizards, who does not give cheers to the Great Governor...! (...) Long live the Great Governor of the Island of Lizards!] (133). Here, the narrator represents a critical voice against the “great governor,” i.e., D. João V and, ultimately, António de Oliveira Salazar.

Da Silva’s opera/comedies were innovative in their use of prose accompanied by music and performed with marionettes (*bonecreiro*). One example is his adaptation of Cervantes’ Don Quijote for marionettes, which raises questions around manipulation and animated/non-animated characters. It also draws attention to genre boundaries (as his comedies were a combination of opera and popular entertainment) and questions of voice, space, and time (who is speaking, where, and when?). To study da Silva’s work as a dramatist in detail beyond the context of Santareno’s depiction and metadramatic approach would require putting these questions in dialogue with the traditions of Spanish tragicomedy and Italian Commedia dell’Arte, thus adding another layer of complexity to the analysis of the eighteenth-century playwright. However, the purpose of this section has been to suggest that Da Silva’s plays, combined with the spectacle of the Inquisition, serve as catalysts of critical distance in laughter. I have shown how the play enacts a revolutionary praxis, breaking with the Inquisition’s violence, dictatorship, and censorship through laughter. Nevertheless, *O Judeu* is not a comic play. Rather, the comic aspect comes from Da Silva’s opera, which serve as comic interludes to the progression from character-*protagonist* to character-dramatist amid the violence the Inquisition’s atrocities. These interludes provide interstitial moments of relief from the seriousness of the play.

Act 3 of *O Judeu* includes several scenes where it is difficult to find humor. One of them is Lourença’s prophetic dream, in which she foresees the extermination of Israel and recites the names of Jews assassinated in extermination camps. The stage directions for this scene specify the projection of documentary films/images, which is a technique used in epic theater. In this case, Santareno suggests the projection of “authentic” images to show the massacre of Jews:

(Sonho Profético de Lourença [...] As imagens escolhidas, que serão autênticas, mostram os massacres de judeus nas câmaras de gás: Massas imensas de vítimas, esfarrapadas ou nuas, movendo-se como num pesadelo, sem elementos precisos no vestuário, ou outros, capazes de as temporizar numa época determinada. Pormenores de horror: o medo angélico das crianças, o rosto da morte nos seres jovens e belos, o misticismo messiânico dos velhos. A luz e o som criarão a necessária unidade entre as imagens filmicas as personagens vivas do palco: As cenas projectadas devem sair de dentro de Lourença, da raiz da sua angústia como ondas de pavor. Ouvir-se-á, durante a projeção, o velho canto de amor judaico “Shema Israel Adonoi Elohenu Adonoi Echod...” Ao ritmo feroz dos tambores de guerra, uma Voz trágica irá rememorando os nomes malditos dos campos de extermínio.) (Santareno, *O Judeu* 138)

[Lourença’s Prophetic Dream [...]] The chosen images, which will be authentic, show the massacres of Jews in the gas chambers: immense masses of victims, ragged or naked, moving as in a nightmare, without precise elements in their clothing or anything else capable of situating them in a specific time. Details of horror: the angelic fear of children, the face of death in young and beautiful

beings, the messianic mysticism of the old. Light and sound will create the necessary unity between the filmic images and the living characters on stage: The projected scenes should come out of Lourença, from the root of her anguish like waves of dread. One will hear, during the projection, the old Jewish love song “Shema Israel Adonoi Elohenu Adonoi Echod...” To the fierce rhythm of the war drums, a tragic Voice will recall the cursed names of the extermination camps.]

It is very difficult to imagine this scene eliciting any type of laughter. However, Da Silva relativizes his mother’s dream saying that it is just a dream and that he is no longer afraid. Da Silva explains that even though he does not have faith and lives a tragic life, he accepts himself as a Jew (in contrast to his stance at the beginning of the play). He attributes this acceptance of his identity to his activity in the theater in which laughter is the central piece:

DA SILVA: Medos, profecias, sonhos, fantasmas, presságios...? Sombras, nuvens negras, pobres e incorpóreas sombras que a luz *real* do dia, a voz dos que me aclamam e glorificam...em um instante, esbandalha e desfaz. Eu creio tão-só nos gritos que ouço, nos corpos que apalpo; E estes são *meus!* Só a realidade conta, vale e pesa. A realidade é ser Da Silva, o Judeu, um *rei*, no Teatro do Bairro Alto. Um rei! o povo ama-me: Ri quando eu quero, e de quanto eu queira; pensa o que eu mandar que ele pense. E não só o povo pequeno. Mesmo os de sangue. Até Sua Majestade já se debruça, enfeita e pendura em o Judeu, com outros mui altos o discutindo e por causa dele todos folgando...O Judeu sou eu!! Esta, esta é a realidade. (140)

[DA SILVA: Fears, prophecies, dreams, ghosts, omens...? Shadows, black clouds, poor, incorporeal shadows that the real light of day, the voice of those who acclaim and glorify me... in an instant, shatters and dissolves. I believe only in the screams I hear, in the bodies I touch; and these are mine! Only reality counts, has worth and weight. Reality is being Da Silva, the Jew, a king, at the Bairro Alto Theater. A king! the people love me: they laugh when I want, and as much as I want; they think what I tell them to think. And not only the little people. Even those of noble blood. Even His Majesty is already leaning over, adorning himself and hanging on the Jew, with other very high-ups discussing him, and because of him everyone is having a good time... I am the Jew! This, this is the reality.]

It is after this triumphant declaration that Cavaleiro de Oliveira introduces a second work by Da Silva, *Esopaida ou Vida de Esopo*, an opera that makes the crowd *within* the play—particularly the “estrangeirados”—burst into laughter with its criticism of Jesuitism and mocking portrayal of scholasticism as an old and outdated school of thought.

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: E sabeis acaso que vieram aqui fazer, ao Teatro Bairro Alto, estes quatro ilustres estrangeirados? Rir. Rir, com o Judeu, da escolástica e das suas vãs e emaranhadas teses mais que ridículas. Rir do saber mofosos bolorento que, enquistados em seus velhos casulos, os Jesuítas ensinam doutoralmente no mosteiros e nas escolas. Olhai que, com eles (...), estão os espíritos de Locke, de Espinosa, de Jussieu, de Lineu, de Descartes, de Newton, de Voltaire, de Montesquieu...Rir. Riamos nós também, eu com Vossas Senhorias, que a isso viemos. (146)

[CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: And do you know what these four illustrious *estrangeirados* came here to do, to the Bairro Alto Theater? To laugh. To laugh, with the Jew, at scholasticism and its vain and tangled theses that are more than ridiculous. To laugh at the moldy, moldy knowledge that, cooped up in their old cocoons, the Jesuits teach doctorally in monasteries and schools. Behold, with them (...) are the spirits of Locke, of Espinosa, of Jussieu, of Linnaeus, of Descartes, of Newton, of Voltaire, of Montesquieu...To laugh. Let us laugh too, I with Your Lordships, who have come to this.]

The scene portrays a rehearsal of the play in which Da Silva as a character-dramatist offends the actors one moment and shows his dedication to them and their art the next. He specifically says that the stage is sacred, especially when juxtaposed with the hardship of their lives outside of the theater, and the only place where they can all be reborn in beauty, justice, goodness, and purity. He also tells them that laughter is their banner, their revenge and rebellion:

DA SILVA: Este teatro é, tem de ser!, para mim, para vós outros, como um sacramento: Mal pisamos este estrado, logo de cada um de nós se descasca - seca, regada, grossa e pestilenta - a crosta miserável das vidas que, lá fora, obrigados somos de viver! E renascemos belos e justos, bons e puros. E damos, a quantos nos vêem e escutam, a beleza, a justiça, a castidade...de que não mister para bem viver. Isto podemos: isto faremos!! Não com a inocência da pomba, não com os olhos da águia - que esta não no-los permite a censura do Santo Ofício! - mas com a prudência da serpente: Com o riso, pelo riso. Que bandeira, vingança e rebeldia, o riso ser pode também!... (158-9)

[DA SILVA: This theater is, it must be, for me, for you others, like a sacrament: As soon as we step onto this platform, the miserable crust of the lives we are forced to live outside peels away from each of us—dry, watered, thick and pestilent—and we are reborn beautiful and just, good and pure! And we give, to those who see and hear us, the beauty, the justice, the chastity... that they need to live well. This we can: this we will do! Not with the innocence of the dove, not with the eyes of the eagle—the censure of the Holy Office does not allow it!—but with the prudence of the serpent: with laughter, for laughter. What a banner, revenge and rebellion, laughter can also be!

It is interesting to note that in addition to the stage directions and Cavaleiro de Oliveira's narration, Da Silva himself now points to the importance of laughter for his own practice. Following his speech, there is a dialogue between Da Silva (as a character-dramatist) and the actor performing D. Tibúrcio (one of the characters of *Esopaida*). The dramatist once again underscores that when an audience laughs, they are laughing at the characters and not at themselves: "*Alembados quero sempre estejais que, quando o público se rir com o que vós disserdes e fizerdes, é desses médicos intrujões que ele troça rindo*" (198) [I always want you to remember that when the public laughs at what you say and do, it is those cheating doctors they laugh at]. (198)

A third play, *Anphitrião ou Júpiter e Alcmena*, is then presented, offering a reflection on the love affairs of the powerful, including that of the king, D. João V, with the actress

Petronilla.⁴⁷ While we witness some unease from the king and Petronilla, who are attending the play, Da Silva interrupts the scene apologizing for any offense caused inadvertently. One of the characters falls and the king laughs, easing the tension of the situation.

After this operatic interlude, the audience is again confronted with the violence of Da Silva's life in a scene where he is taken from his house by the Inquisition officials, including the character "Estudante Pálido," [Pale Student], leaving his pregnant wife Leonor and Lourença in despair (though they would soon be arrested too, as Cavaleiro de Oliveira tells us). Once again, Cavaleiro de Oliveira comments on the injustice of Da Silva's imprisonment and reminds the audience that even as the dramatist is suffering at the hands of the Inquisition, his work is still being praised in the Teatro do Bairro Alto. It is as if the narrator is pointing towards the impossibility of assassinating art, laughter, and the critique of the system, even when men and women are silenced and killed:

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: Enquanto esta afronta, que tirana violência é, sobre ele e seus familiares se desencadeia, no Teatro do Bairro Alto, no seu teatro, representa-se em cada noite, com nunca desmentido sucesso, a última das suas óperas: o "Precipício de Faetonte". Rindo, e pela gargalhada desafivelando os cintos todos do medo e da opressão, em cada noite o público elege, clama e reclama o seu Poeta!..." (178)

[CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: While this affront, which is tyrannical violence, is unleashed upon him and his family, the last of his operas is performed every night at the Bairro Alto Theater, with ongoing success: the *Precipice of Phaethon*. Laughing, and through laughter unbuckling all the belts of fear and oppression, every night the public elects, clamors and claims its Poet!]

This interlude is followed by the interrogation of Escrava Negra [Black Slave Girl] and Bento Pereira, who appear as witnesses against Da Silva. While Cavaleiro de Oliveira's incomprehension is noteworthy, it is even more important to mention that de Oliveira refers to the non-interference of the king to save Da Silva. The Great Inquisitor shows no mercy toward Da Silva and reiterates that the court will judge him justly. The final scene of the play, in which Da Silva is accused, tortured, and killed for being a "Jew" is not subtle or laughable. The reader/spectator cannot escape the violent ending which is part of the "didactic" component of the play. However, Cavaleiro de Oliveira makes a final appeal to enlighten the people of Portugal:

CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: *Em nome de Da Silva agonizante, vos rogo e imploro: ILUMINAI O POVO DE PORTUGAL!!!* (205)

[CAVALEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: In the name of the dying Da Silva, I beg and implore you: ILLUMINATE THE PEOPLE OF PORTUGAL!!!]

Ironically or not, the scene ends with the chanting of Inquisition's motto *Exurge Domine et judica causam tuam*, the bloody hate of the people, and the light of the fire consuming Da Silva.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to offer a more nuanced analysis of the play by exploring the textual dimension of laughter. I consider laughter not as a natural bodily expression but as a rhetorical device used to convey meaning. Even though *O Judeu*, with its serious tone, most

⁴⁷ A historical reference to Petronilla Xibaja, an 18th century Gallaecian comedian whose name was often associated with love scandals. In the play, Cavaleiro de Oliveira establishes a dialogue with the character of Petronilla.

closely resembles a tragedy, the presence of the *laughing body* plays a key role in creating a kind of comic interlude that functions as a distancing technique, making the familiar unfamiliar and promoting critical thinking. The comic interludes of the play, the “laughter of hope,” and the figure of Da Silva as character-dramatist suggest an alternative yet accessible account of what is ostensibly a tragic and “serious” play. To support my argument, I did not focus on the collective experience of the *laughing body* of the audience of the play but rather on the collective experience of laughter *within* the play. I have identified the *laughing body* through the stage directions and the events presented by the narrator, Cavaleiro de Oliveira, who acts as a mediator between the “play(s) within the play” and the reader/spectator. The mediator communicates the crowds’ reactions but also conditions our own by signaling moments of laughter. He is also a stand-in for the playwright, reflecting on the act of making theater. Through the figure of Cavaleiro de Oliveira, Santareno is pointing to the (de)construction of the audience experience. The playwright is also emphasizing the artist’s lack of freedom to criticize institutions, the existence of censorship, and poetic conventions, which he experienced. In sum, *O Judeu* is a play that offers several layers of intertextuality, historical references, and critical nuances, and interpreting it is a permanent dialogue with ourselves as readers/spectators.

Chapter 3

Laughter and Marxism in Brazilian Revolutionary Theater pre-1964

Parvulescu has convincingly argued that there is no adequate language to speak about laughter. Given this, I propose that it is more useful to focus on *scenarios* of laughter, more or less in line with Diana Taylor's call to account for the embodied and performative aspects of cultural practice: "By shifting the focus from written to embodied culture, from discursive to the performative, we need to shift our methodologies. Instead of focusing on patterns of cultural expression in terms of texts and narratives, we might think about them as scenarios that do not reduce gestures and embodied practices to narrative description" (16). In this chapter, I identify Brazilian theatrical *scenarios* where laughter is welcome, and examine those typically categorized as humorous, as well as those that use rhetorical strategies to make the audience/reader laugh. The purposes vary — from raising political consciousness to merely entertaining or provoking some sense of relief in the recipient. How laughter is received, as well as why and when laughter occurs, will always remain an enigma. I specifically examine the work associated with the *Teatro de Arena* and the *Centro Popular de Cultura* (CPC) [Popular Center for Culture] of the *União Nacional dos Estudantes* (UNE) [National Student Union] (CPC-UNE), paying particular attention to Boal's *Revolução na América do Sul* (1960) and Vianna Filho's *A Mais Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar* (1960-61). In both cases, I demonstrate how these playwrights tack revolutionary theater with revue theater, all while maintaining a nationalist and anti-capitalist framework.

The *mise-en-scène* of these plays was critical for the creation of the scenarios where distancing techniques and the absurd of the scenes compelled the audience to laugh and, through laughter, identify and examine the socioeconomic context of Brazil before the rise of the military dictatorship. However, due to research constraints, my analysis does not include an examination of the plays' enactments, which would have been vital for the study of laughter as an embodiment practice. Instead, in this chapter, I delve into the multiple *scenarios* of laughter evoked by the dramatic texts. The playwrights break the fourth wall and create a sense of distancing by weaving different theatrical techniques associated with comic and formal elements from farses to revue theater. They also include extra-textual elements on stage, such as choruses and posters, to name but a few. The tone is political, and it ushered in a revolutionary theater inspired by Brecht's work that was innovative and subversive in the Brazilian theatrical scene of the early 1960s. Therefore, I argue that we cannot understand the Brazilian reception and adaptation of Brecht's epic theater without considering the pivotal influence of revue, similar to the influence of cabaret in the work of the German playwright. Before exploring some of these scenarios, we shall consider the 20th-century Brazilian sociopolitical context in which the country's theater developed new contours.

According to George, the Brazilian sociopolitical context between 1930 and 1990 is best divided up into four subperiods. The first subperiod (1930-45) corresponds to Getúlio Vargas's revolution, where populism and repression formed the basis of what became known as *Estado Novo*. The second subperiod, which George identifies as the period between 1946 and 1964, marked the continuation of populism, a nationalist euphoria, and developmentalism, a trifecta of fertile ground for the development of the so-called modern Brazilian theater. This development would be interrupted in 1964 by the military coup that promoted repression, terror, and censorship. In December of 1968, during Costa e Silva's rule, Institutional Act No. 5 was passed,

strengthening executive power and decreasing judicial power. The ensuing curtailment of individual freedoms, growth of law enforcement, and suspension of *habeas corpus* further contributed to institutional censorship, and more prisons, torture, and persecution of those who opposed the regime. Between 1976 and 1988, Brazil faced what George calls a gradual re-democratization during the end of the dictatorial regime.

During the four subperiods, Brazilian postcoloniality was no longer limited to European epistemological resources, but instead invited analysis of the historical-political reality of Brazil. In the first half of the century, Brazilian intellectuals and artists felt the impact of two seminal events: the *Semana de Arte Moderna* [Modern Art Week], held in São Paulo in 1922, and the establishment of the *Estado Novo* that accompanied the 1930 revolution spearheaded by Getúlio Vargas. *Semana de Arte Moderna* engendered several artistic and literary responses, namely reinterpretations of *Antropofagia* [anthropophagy], a concept developed primarily but not exclusively by Andrade. At the same time, the 1930 revolution provoked intellectual radicalism in social analysis of the country, especially in the school of thought developed at the University of São Paulo. Both events centered the heart of Brazil's progress on the ideal of modernity in a country that, for the Brazilian intelligentsia, was still struggling with economic, political, and social backwardness, to which it intended to provide solutions.

Between 1945 and the 1960s, Brazilian theater developed by revisiting theatrical and dramatic aesthetics. Besides *Teatro de revista brasileiro* [Brazilian revue theater], theater in the 1940s and early 1950s was carried out by amateur groups in São Paulo, student groups in Rio de Janeiro, and the *Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia* (TBC) [Brazilian Comedy Theater]. The TBC presented itself as the most prestigious theater, not only because its audience was mainly the bourgeoisie, but also because most of its productions revealed an effort to Europeanize Brazilian cultural life (J. Boal 17). Playwright and theorist Boal developed a taxonomy of Brazilian theater in the first half of the twentieth century, and he included the TBC as “alienated theater,” i.e., a “summary of alienation to please the bourgeois audience and refusing to discuss national issues” (Araújo 267). While the TBC and other groups contributed to the reclamation and professionalization of Brazilian theater, nationalized radical theater developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s as an effort to promote class consciousness and aesthetic renewal. Several groups were protagonists of the nationalized theatrical scene, namely *Teatro de Arena* and *Teatro Oficina* in the 1950s, and CPC-UNE and *Grupo Opinião* [Opinion Group] in the 1960s.

Teatro de Arena was founded in 1953 by Renato José Pécora and other theater practitioners looking to experiment with new stage settings. Pécora had been influenced by the American director Margo Jones and her concept of theater-in-the-round, and he consequently developed an experimental way of directing plays in Brazil. In 1956, Boal joined the theater company, bringing theoretical and technical approaches (such as Stanislavski's) that he had learned in the United States with John Gassner (Tennessee Williams's professor). Until 1958, *Teatro de Arena* did not differ much from the TBC in terms of repertoire. However, with the staging of the play *Eles Não Usam Black Tie*, written by Gianfrancesco Guarnieri in 1955 and directed by Pécora in 1958, as well as the dramaturgy seminars led by Guarnieri, Vianna Filho, and Boal, *Teatro de Arena* would end up founding the process that came to be called “the nationalization of theater” (J. Boal 17). At the heart of *Arena*'s purpose was the representation of Brazilian reality as an act of political engagement. Julián Boal gives an account of the contradictions and implications of *Arena* seeking to reveal the country to theatergoers by representing peripheral and regional realities unknown to his public in São Paulo, which was

made up of the middle class. He reminds us that "*esse espelho da realidade seria somente uma etapa*" [this mirror of reality would only be a stage] (18) and, thus, challenge us to consider the implication of intellectuals producing works that aimed to "show" Brazil to Brazilians.

The nationalization of Brazilian theater based on Arena's work encouraged internal debates. This led to the dissent of some members who, together with other cultural activists, would later form the CPC-UNE. Created in 1961-62, the CPC researched popular cultural heritage as the basis for political engagement (Damasceno 73). They were also concerned with maintaining the *revista* tradition, since the genre allowed a close relation between theater makers and the public. CPC's prominent figure was Vianna Filho, who criticized Arena for its staging, its middle- and upper-class audience, the location of the theater itself, and the professionalization of its cast, which was determined by box office (J. Boal 19). Vianna Filho, or Vianninha as he would come to be known, sought to find ways for theater to reach the masses. Theater researchers such as I. C. Costa saw the CPC as the inaugural chapter of the Brazilian theater of agitation and political propaganda - or agitprop - even though in the book *Agitprop: Cultura Política* Costa recognizes cultural anarchists' work of the late 19th and 20th century as proto-agitprop (Estevam 29). The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia strengthened the agitprop program, and the CPC, together with *Ligas Camponesas no Nordeste* [Peasant Leagues in the Northeast] (1955-64), not only politicized the theatrical world, but also changed Brazilian theater and music. The work of the CPC would be interrupted by the repression of the military dictatorship established in 1964. However, political agitation and the repression of other militant theater groups did not deter those who continued to seek militancy in the theater, perhaps even more staunchly than before. In addition to the CPC, university and professional theater groups, along with playwrights like Nelson Xavier and Ariano Suassuna, played an essential role in Brazilian theater before the 1964 military coup.

When one examines some of these Brazilian dramatic production before the coup, particularly Arena's and CPC's, there is a name that often comes to mind – Brecht. The work of the playwright started circulating in Brazil in the 1940s via French translations, German people settling in Brazil (such as Anatol Rosenfeld), and Brazilian artists and critics familiarizing themselves with the work of Brecht through trips in Europe (40). Brechtian reception was a slow process, but the ideas of the German dramatist ended up influencing the work produced by a whole generation of Brazilian leftist artists, particularly between 1958 (when the first Brecht play – *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* [The Good Person of Szechwan] [1943] – was enacted) and the military coup in 1964.⁴⁸ Boal and Vianninha are certainly part of the group of Brazilian playwrights that were deeply influenced by Brecht. The consensus among critics of Brecht's influence in Brazilian theater is undeniable. However, it is key to remember that the reception of the playwright's work in Brazil was happening in a time and space completely different from that of Germany in the first half of the twentieth century. In that sense, such influence could hardly result in a fixed and solid adaptation of Brecht's work. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that the Brazilian playwrights Boal and Vianninha incorporated some of the *teatro de revista brasileiro* techniques into their version of epic theater, resembling Brecht's inclusion of popular German musical theater, namely cabaret, into his plays. While several critics point out the collage of Brechtian techniques with those of revue, I want to show that a collage is already intrinsic to Brecht's work. What is new in the Brazilian playwrights is what differentiates its

⁴⁸ After the coup, state censorship chased any engaged, politicized, and dialectic discourse seen as subversive and against the regime. This affected the circulation of Brecht's works but not the theoretical influence of the German playwright after 1964, which I discuss in the chapter 4.

historical context and the contours of *teatro de revista brasileiro* (itself conditioned by the context) during the production of the plays.

Up until 1928, Brecht's dramatic texts had not gained the popularity that *Die Dreigroschnoper* [The Threepenny Opera] would obtain after the premiere on August 31 of the same year in *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm* in Berlin, Germany. Adapted from the musical opera *The Beggar's Opera* by John Gay (1724), the play received recognition not only because of its revolutionary take on capitalist societies, but also because its strong musical component at the responsibility of the composer Kurt Weill⁴⁹. With the success of this play, and together with Weill, Brecht had established his name in Germany and beyond, continuing to work solo and in collaboration with the composer afterward. In the aftermath of the rise of the Nazi party, the playwright left the country to avoid persecution. He lived in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, in the United States, and briefly in other European countries before going back to East Berlin in 1949 where he would establish the theater company Berliner Ensemble and die in 1956. Brecht was very productive during his exile years, having written several literary works, including plays in which there was an overt critique to fascism and capitalism (such as *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* [Mother Courage and Her Children] in 1939 or *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* [The Caucasian Chalk Circle] in 1944, among others) and developed many collaborations, all of which would contribute to his work and to his theoretical approach to epic theater. As stated by Peter Brooker, Brechtian 'epic' theater was in itself a collage of different sources, which one should consider upon studying the dramatist work. According to Brooker,

'Epic' is the description most commonly applied to Brecht's theatre. We should realise that the term was in use in German debates before Brecht adapted it, however, and that for Brecht too it had several sources: the political theatre of Erwin Piscator and German agitprop; the cabaret of Frank Wedekind and the work of the music hall comedian Karl Valentin; Charlie Chaplin and American silent film; Asian and revolutionary Soviet theatre; as well as Shakespeare and Elizabethan chronicle plays. (211)

Additionally, it is not possible to think of Brecht's work and that of those influenced by him without considering not only Berlin's social and political contours in the first half of the twentieth century but also the modern movements of literature, theater, and the arts in the city that, during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), had become the center of creativity and hedonism of Europe. A few years after the first world war ended, German's capital flourished with many forms of entertainment where sexual freedom, art and music experimentation, social liberalization, and exuberance accompanied the years of economic and political stabilization. This period is also known as the *Goldene Zwanziger* [Golden Twenties] and while it would be deeply affected by the crisis of 1929, the rise of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, and Hitler's dictatorship, between 1924-29 it opened space for cultural euphoria and social movements, in addition to have eternalized artistic schools such as Bauhaus and names such as Anita Berber, Kurt Weill, Otto Dix, Karl Valentin, and Josephine Baker, among many others.

Kabarett (or Cabaret) was a pivotal form of live entertainment during the Weimar Republic⁵⁰. It captured Berlin's social and artistic life, including the conditions in which people

⁴⁹ Brecht's play inspired many other works and adaptations, including the musical play *Ópera do Malandro* by the Brazilian author and composer Chico Buarque de Hollanda (1978), in which we see a portrait of Brazilian society between the 1940s and the 1979s.

⁵⁰ During the Weimar period, 'Kabarett' and 'Cabaret' were used interchangeably. Since the 1950s, "Cabaret has referred to a strip show, while Kabarett is reserved for social criticism or political satire." (Jelavich 1)

lived and the hedonism that characterized the Weimar era. Even though Cabaret originated in 1880s France, the German form evolved from a more conservative to a more progressive one in the 1920s. Broadly, most cabarets mixed sexual liberation acts and political satire and often had displays of nudity and sexual innuendo through various numbers that included songs, dancing, and comedic acts. According to Peter Jelavich in the book *Berlin Cabaret* (1996), the “ideal type” cabaret overall

consisted of a small stage in a relatively small hall, where the audience sat around tables. The intimacy of the setting allowed direct, eye-to-eye contact between performers and spectators. The show consisted of short (five- or ten-minute) numbers from several different genres, usually songs, comic monologues, dialogues and skits, less frequently dances, pantomimes, puppet shows, or even short films. They dealt in a satirical or parodistic manner with topical issues: sex (most of all), commercial fashions, cultural fads, politics (least of all). These numbers were usually presented by professional singers and actors, but often writers, composers, or dancers would perform their own works. The presentations were linked together by a conferencier, a type of emcee who interacted with the audience, made witty remarks about events of the day, and introduced the performers. (2)

Revue theater and agitprop were also “companions” to cabaret, or types of performances that composed the dramatic theater scene in Berlin⁵¹. If revue was more “commercial,” agitprop was more overtly political (2). In any case, the two genres and other types of public and commercial entertainment followed cabaret-style performances and used humor and satire as political tools.⁵² Cabaret focused more on themes that revue and agitprop did not explore as much, such as same-sex relationships, prostitution, gender issues, and eroticism at large (5).

In addition to Brecht’s attraction for clowning (which I explored in chapter 2 when I discussed the influence that German clown Karl Valentin had on Brecht’s formative years in Munich before the latter moved to Berlin in 1924), the playwright was fascinated by the cabaret experience at large, which influenced the creation of his conception of epic theater. Some of the characteristics from cabaret (and, to a certain extent, from revue) one can identify in Brecht’s epic theater include the episodic structure of the acts, the interludes and commentary of the conferencier, the cabaret song, the comic incongruity, and the connection between the audience and the performers that broke the fourth wall (Double and Wilson 47-49). This connection was possible due to the style of performance developed in cabaret settings — one where there was an allure connected to each performer, often representing her or himself in all physical and personal features. As Double and Wilson demonstrate,

⁵¹ Contrary to the United States where popular musical theater has enjoyed some prestige, and as it is the case with Portuguese and Brazilian revue, cabaret and revue in Germany has been traditionally relegated to a marginal space in academia.

⁵² Brecht used satire for political purposes. In the literary tradition, satire has been identified and defined since the antiquity. Contemporary views on satire tend to agree that there is no fixed definition for the term due to its rhetorical complexity. In any case, according to the Oxford Research Encyclopedias, early 21st century criticism has continued to “internally reproduce a division between satire’s aesthetic qualities and its ethical or instrumental qualities.” (Stinson) Approaching the concept from a more conventional take on the rhetorical device, Justin Cash points out that satire is a traditional form of comedy that will ridicule and/or mock an individual, an institution, a group of people, or an event (Cash). The satirical speech is traditionally more effective the more well-known of the audience is the target of the mockery. Public figures tend to be the targets of satire as it often discredits the worth of the individuals and/or institution they represent.

Unlike actors who use costume and make-up to represent somebody else, the cabaret performer tends to represent him- or herself. As a result, face, hairstyle, voice, turn of phrase, body shape, stance and mannerisms all become an important part of the texture of the act and in some indefinable way contribute to those slippery qualities of presence and charisma. This is something that Brecht seemed to grasp instinctively. (55)

As mentioned by the authors, cabaret provided models for what Brecht would call *Gestus* and *Verfremdungseffekt* [distancing effect] in addition to provoking pleasure and entertainment, which Brecht considered pivotal in the theatrical experience (59-60).

Brecht's theoretical and dramatic work also exposes some connections with revue theater (in its "ideal-type" form as a genre), which seems coherent with the idea that revue and agitprop were closely related to cabaret. All genres combined music, political satire, and humor and resulted in a collage of elements, which is something that we encounter in Brecht's work as well – an assemblage of theatrical techniques that resulted in a very particular stylistic configuration. On the surface, Brecht's theater shares with revue the episodic structure, characters lacking psychological complexity, historical references, comic, melodramatic, emotional content, spectacularity, and the use of songs. Nevertheless, the playwright privileges a dialectic approach to the various elements, which revue does not. Such an approach results in a didactic theater that intends to instigate the audience to criticize the portrayed reality, whereas in a revue, the political satire, for example, results in a more "superficial" critique whose function is to use humor to release an internal tension the spectator might be feeling, i.e., a type of farcical catharsis (Contreras 98-99). In any case, revue engaged with the modern world and challenged conservatism regarding gender, class, and national identities in addition to articulating political issues (Platt et al. 5). If until the Great Depression, commercial revues enjoyed great popularity in Berlin, cabaret-revue counterbalanced the live entertainment scene after 1926 (Jelavich 190).

An important aspect to consider about Brecht is his fascination for humor and comedy. We have seen that both Karl Valentin and Charlie Chaplin were influential for Brecht, in addition to the attraction for popular musical theater and cabaret-revues. However, Brecht's position as a Marxist and political theater practitioner, particularly in the West, did not match the ideas around comicality but those of seriousness. Arguably, Brecht did not write comedies as we understand them in the works of Aristophanes, Molière, Gil Vicente, or Da Silva; however, as Marc Silberman reminds us, the playwright was a comic author in which:

The comic refers in this instance to a structural principle under lying acts and communication that exposes the conflict between what is and what should be; between a subject's acts and thoughts and the harsh reality imposed upon them. Brecht's plays integrate a range of comic elements, from slapstick and commedia dell'arte exaggeration, to burlesque and stagey playfulness. Constructing paradoxical situations became his method for demonstrating the incongruities of capitalist social systems. Unlike many communist writers, who tend toward the tragic dimension of revolutionary violence, sacrifice, and social injustice, he saw the transgressive power of humor as a weapon in his arsenal of theatrical forms; he had a good sense of humor and used it to convey a serious message about the need to intervene and change the world. In his case, then, not everything comical leads to laughter, and even the comical can be taken seriously. (170)

Brecht “saw the transgressive power of humor” and used it “to intervene and change the world.” The playwright used it as a distancing technique, i.e., through incongruous, absurd, and paradoxical scenes, characters’ behaviors, or portrayed social structure, he would bring forth comicality, laughter and, consequently, “trigger a critical thought process, and for Brecht that critique is inherent in the dialectical structure of the comic.” (183) In any case, this elementary approach to Brecht’s theater interests me most because it shows us that the dramatist’s work was a collage of different genres and theatrical traditions.

Among the various focal points that the work of Brecht invokes, the relationship with the comic and with music is among the most pivotal for our understanding of Brecht’s impact in Latin America in general, and in Brazil, in particular. While in the Brazilian theatrical scene of the 1950s and 1960s, several playwrights put their efforts into creating popular musical theater, most critics have highlighted the Brecht’s distancing techniques used by the German playwright in detriment of the use *teatro de revista* for the creation of estrangement by Brazilian dramatist. In this chapter, I analyze *Revolução* and *A Mais-Valia* as local (“Brazilian”) adaptations of Brecht’s epic theater. I agree that the Brazilian leftist playwrights, wanting to show Brazil to Brazilians in a critical way, opted to use Brecht’s methods of creating estrangement. However, I add that they adapted local “theatrical languages,” musical styles, and social contours to what they had learned from Brecht, creating Brazilian epic theatricalities. By this I mean that, instead of a coexistence of Brechtian techniques with *revista* precepts, and similar to what cabaret had meant for Brecht’s plays, Brazilian revue theater was incorporated into what one can identify as a uniquely Brazilian epic theatricalities – i.e., a corpus of revolutionary set of plays produced in Brazil before 1964 and inspired by popular musical theater and literature.

Despite the scant attention that theater scholars have devoted to revue theater, the genre circulated widely in many geographic spaces. Between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s-40s, revue was cultivated in most of Europe’s large cities. Revue was likewise popular in cities across the Americas, such as New York City, Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro, as well as in East Asian cities like Taipei and Tokyo. More than any relation to a specific country, the genre was an expression of the dynamics of urban life, functioning as a space where modern life could be experienced. As a phenomenon that crossed borders and became a global genre, revue theater necessitates study and discussion for anyone interested in modern metropolises, particularly from a transnational, transatlantic, and transcontinental standpoint.

In a comparative analysis of revue theater, Makiko Yamanashi argues that the genre is a liminal one that bridges “seemingly opposing elements, such as the foreign and the domestic, the classic and the innovative, the traditional and the modern, the professional and the amateur, high and low culture, and the feminine and the masculine” (iii). Despite this apparent complexity, revue theater has received little scholarly attention. Yamanashi identifies three reasons for this omission: 1) the large number of pieces makes it extremely difficult to identify and examine them comprehensively; 2) it is generally thought that revue theater is “mere light entertainment, similar to circus” and that there is not much to analyze in any critical way; and 3) it has proven difficult to define revue as a genre within the academic discipline of theater studies (Yamanashi 58). In Portugal, Brazil, and beyond, Yamanashi’s observations find powerful analogues.

In Brazil, revue theater began to flourish in the second half of the nineteenth century, and its history accompanies the formation of the nation. Influenced by the Portuguese, French, and Italian versions of revue theater, Brazil developed its own version through character typification, conventional dramatic structures and formulas, themes, language, and dialogue between artists and audience. Like *Teatro de Revista à Portuguesa*, the genre in Brazil has not received the

scholarly attention other subgenres have received, but its popular “flavor” is arguably the space between performance and audience where laughter happens.

Revista opens several avenues for research and analysis and to study it is to inhabit Brazilian history in an intimate, popular, diverse, heterogeneous, and kaleidoscopic way. The genre encompasses a large volume of production, analyses, themes, practitioners, spaces, and temporalities. The making of *revista* within its political and social contexts adds complexity to a genre that evolved and accompanied the evolution of nation-building. Although the first Brazilian *revista* was written in 1859, it was not until Arthur Azevedo went to Europe in 1883 to see and experience what producers in places like Paris were introducing in their shows that *revista* was able to flourish. Azevedo discovered a spectacle where text, scenography, costumes, music, audience, lighting, and acting were all related to one another. At the time, revue theater in Brazil, as in Portugal, was a “revue” of the year, revisiting all the things that had happened in the year before. Due to their journalistic nature, the shows had a fragmentary yet anticipated life on stage, meant to be consumed if not devoured. At the beginning of the twentieth century, *revista* was no longer reviewing the year; however, it still maintained its fragmented nature. As with *revista* in Portugal, the ephemeral nature of the genre conferred upon it a condition of impermanence, making the scenery, the costumes, choreographies, and lights critical elements of the experience of attending a show. In a time when modernity meant occupying public space and enjoying new technologies provided by electric energy (e.g., lighting, radio, telephone, cable cars, and cinema), cities changed people’s daily lives. Residents could now leave their houses and occupy streets, bars, theaters, cafes, and cinemas, particularly at night. This transformed an industry that now witnessed the rapid evolution of cultural consumption, ranging from the elitist spaces of grand theaters to the bohemian life of lower-income cafes, where people looked for new modes of entertainment in the form of carnival and *rodas de samba* and *choro* (Pereira and Gomes 88).

Despite the fragmentary and impermanent nature of *revista*, its authors depended upon a structure of juxtapositions, collage, and pastiche. As a theatrical genre, *revista* mixed and adapted theatrical, dance, and musical genres; it also crossed binary conceptions of gender, temporality, and space, all of which made possible a significant number of assemblages.⁵³

In terms of structure, *revistas* normally included a prologue and two or three unrelated acts followed by a musical moment. Each act typically contained several numbers, not always related to one another nor with any plot or psychological continuity. The numbers encompassed allegorical characters, stock characters, and caricatures. Allegorical characters represented inanimate objects or abstractions such as the press, the radio, social classes, institutions, and *revista* itself. The characters, or social types, encapsulated stereotypes that allowed for identification by the audience, and were different from the psychological caricatures with a name, a story, and several specificities. Both types projected the sociopolitical panorama and mirrored the cosmopolitanism of progressivist aspirations (Veneziano 122). Some examples of social types include *o português* (the Portuguese man), *a baiana* (the woman from Bahia), *o caipira* (the countryside man), and *a mulata* (the mixed-race woman). The caricatures were typical of renowned figures in Brazilian socio-political life (from politics to letters), such as Getúlio Vargas. According to Veneziano, scripts attempted to recreate the speech patterns of specific individuals, while the enactment copied their mannerisms, hairstyle, and attire. The impersonation allowed the audience to recognize the ridiculed figure, provoking laughter and delight in the room (135). As Veneziano reminds her readers, the conviviality of these types of

⁵³ In Brazil, this mix and match ranged from ballet to *sertanejo* (music from Sertão).

characters on stage worked as a game between “nature and allegory, between the flagrant and the utopian, between the factual and the fanciful.” (139). In revue theater conventions, this game contributed to the *compère* that, more than a character, was a juxtaposition between the clown and the *cabaretier* — bridging and commenting on the numbers and establishing a connection between the show and the audience (117).⁵⁴ The language used in *revista* mixed the language spoken on the streets (including neologisms, slang, and colloquialisms) with literary terms and mythological references, which in addition to its satirical tone, translated into a potpourri of linguistic expressions. Such language treated political and economic affairs and other sociocultural contemporary matters with humor and irony. The appeal of erotic scenes obtained momentum with the development of the genre throughout the decades, unfolding into a central theme of *revistas* that several critics identified as rudeness and “bad taste” (178). *Revistas* also referred to the genre through metalanguage, a way to educate people about the genre’s own conventions.

One aspect of *revista* that obtained notoriety in the first half of the twentieth century, and particularly in Brazil, was music. On one hand, musical genres such as *maxixe* flourished as popular expressions, gaining visibility among theatergoers who wanted to be familiar with such musical contours. On the other hand, jazz and blues continued to permeate the shows, allowing for various national and international musical expressions. Additionally, Brazilian musical theater manifested as operetta, magic, and musical comedies. In the 1920s, the French company Ba-ta-clan in Rio de Janeiro contributed significantly to the development of revue theater, namely in what concerns the female body on stage – now the center of the audience’s attention due to its nakedness, but also the choreographies that, over time, became more elaborate and relevant to the show and its musical aspects.⁵⁵

The aesthetical development of *revista* accompanied the critical development of Rio de Janeiro as an urban hub and space for modernity to flourish, and it put Brazil on the horizon of international economic and capitalistic enterprises. While this is pivotal for understanding how people experienced the cultural scene of Brazil’s new urban centers, it is equally paramount for the interpretation of projects, such as Teatro de Arena and CPC-UNE, that critiqued the modernization and industrialization of Brazilian economy and society by making use of a nationalist and anti-capitalist lens.

The classic approach to Brazilian economic history identifies four main phases of industrialization and capitalism. The first occurred during the colonial period, when the country mainly served as a territory from which Portugal extracted primary products such as sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, and gold. Any use of these products for developing territorial industry was forbidden and punished by Portuguese colonial authorities, leaving Brazil dependent on artisanal products and on imported manufactured goods from Europe, typically via Portugal. The second phase of industrialization occurred in the aftermath of the Portuguese Crown fleeing to Brazil, in 1808, to avoid the first campaign of Napoleon’s invasion. The Crown set up living conditions similar to those they had experienced at court, and by extension their social and cultural activities engendered new recreational spaces and practices that changed the territorial economy; a prime example of this was the creation of theaters. The Portuguese ruler, João VI, altered several laws regarding importing and manufacturing, but the first industries of commodities and textiles did not appear in Brazil until the second half of the 19th century, due to the effect (largely on the

⁵⁴ The figure of *compère* rapidly disappears in *teatro de revista brasileiro*.

⁵⁵ If Ba-ta-clan marked the evolution of *revista* in Brazil, so did specific figures such as Walter Pinto or Artur Azevedo, whose work accompanied the genre’s development in the twentieth century.

coffee plantation growing business) of immigration policies, technological advancements, and new infrastructures such as railroads. The era between the world wars, which was characterized by the international scene and Getúlio Vargas's government, boosted the third phase of Brazil's industrialization. From the 1930s to the military dictatorship of 1964, there was considerable state investment in heavy industries such as oil production and processing. These investments translated into new labor policies and internal migrations that remapped the country's societal relations and territories. Populations concentrated in the more industrialized regions of the Southeast, causing a rapid shift from an agrarian society to an industrial one. The current fourth phase began with the 1960 completion of Brasilia as the nation's capital and an iconic site of modernity. This continued with the military regime's nationalization policies, namely in the construction of large infrastructures, and with an opening-up to foreign capital, the privatization of state companies, and the neoliberal practices that came with the democratic regime of 1985.

The development of capitalism in Brazil had violent consequences related to exploitation of the workforce. In the nineteenth century, labor was based on slavery, which has had an unmeasurable social, cultural, and economic impact, not to mention the loss of lives, freedom, histories (official and personal), and archives⁵⁶. In the aftermath of the cessation of the slave trade in 1850, and the abolition of slavery in 1888, the country promoted immigration and rural exodus, particularly from the North and Northeast Regions, to guarantee wage earners for the development of industry, namely coffee production. Dislocation had a profound impact on every region and its population, in addition to the many thousands of formerly enslaved people, freed without compensation, who were left with nothing more than the vagaries of fortune. The remapping of the country in the late nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century ushered in the economic and sociopolitical dominance of the South and Southeast Regions, and particularly of the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Porto Alegre. An increasingly unequal society, along with the industrialization of the country, continues to the present day.

These considerations are pivotal to provide context to the persistent inequality and disparity in Brazil. In the first half of the twentieth century, the issue preoccupied many sociologists, intellectuals, and artists. From culture to economics, people like Manuel Bomfim, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Caio Prado Júnior, and Celso Furtado produced work that centered mainly on the legacy of colonialism in Brazil to understand the inequality in the country. Several reflections became part of a series of studies composing a complex look at Brazilian post-coloniality. One name often mentioned concerning the development of Brazilian capitalism, notably in its relationship with slavery and its aftermath and public education, is Florestan Fernandes. Fernandes developed the concept of *capitalismo dependente* [dependent capitalism], partially explaining why the development of capitalism in Brazil did not result in progress and better living conditions for the people but in more inequality and social death. The theatrical class was also critical of the exploitation resulting from colonialism and capitalism and attentive to the need for a Brazilian aesthetic language. Dramatic projects have raised pivotal points for a critical understanding of the history of Brazilian theater. Among these, the plays *Revolução na América do Sul* (1960) by Boal and *A Mais-Valia vai Acabar, Seu Edgar!* (1960) by Vianninha are two examples of works where the development of capitalism is questioned through a Brazilian adaptation of Brechtian epic theater from a nationalistic angle, including the use of revue elements and rhetorical strategies such as humor.

⁵⁶ Alternative and critical geographies and remapping finally claim the recovery of some of the stolen lives and archives.

Thus, in the following pages I draw attention to spaces of laughter and historiographic constructions inhabited by estrangement. To achieve this aim, I look at modern leftist Brazilian theater like Yamanashi looks at *revista*—as liminal. By examining the hybrid dramatic imaginaries that do not conform with canonical structures, genres, and speeches, I look at the plays’ epic contours as liminal theatricalities. By liminal theatricalities, I mean the symbolic and rhetorical dramatic spaces of contradictions and transformations in which the tragic and the comic coexist in a tightly woven way.

Boal & Vianninha and Liminal Theatricalities

As Roéféro explains, a dialectic appropriation of Brecht’s work requires an understanding of the instability and eclecticism of his theater in dialogue with local idiosyncrasies and needs (52). Beyond this, one should consider that Brechtian dialectic could never be coherent with any orthodox or formulaic implementation of his aesthetics. In a study of Brecht’s influence on Boal and Vianninha, Roéféro affirms:

Tanto Boal, quanto Vianna, portanto, demonstram, pela própria estrutura formal e pelo conteúdo de suas peças, certa maturidade em distinguir a dose de influência da de autonomia em seus trabalhos. Eles aferem bem a temperatura dessa recepção brechtiana: compreendem os pressupostos desse teatro dialético sem, contudo, tornar o teatro brasileiro submisso ou refém do autor e do teatro que impactou tanto o cenário artístico brasileiro após a década de 1960. Segundo Carvalho (2021), “há muitas teatralidades épicas no teatro épico” (75) e acreditamos que Boal e Vianna conseguiram encontrar, cada um a seu modo, vertentes dessas teatralidades. (52-53)

[Both Boal and Vianna, therefore, demonstrate, by the formal structure and content of their plays, a certain maturity in distinguishing the amount of influence from the amount of autonomy in their works. They gauge well the temperature of this Brechtian reception: they understand the assumptions of this dialectical theater without, however, making Brazilian theater submissive or hostage to the author and the theater that impacted so much the Brazilian artistic scene after the 1960s. According to Carvalho (2021), “there are many epic theatricalities in the epic theater” (p. 75) and we believe that Boal and Vianna managed to find, each in their own way, strands of these theatricalities]

In a nutshell, Roéféro underscores Boal and Vianninha’s idiosyncratic incorporation of Brechtian epic theater in their work.⁵⁷ I find it significant and fruitful that Roéféro challenge us to distinguish the amount of influence from autonomy that Brecht had in Boal and Vianninha, particularly if we consider their own ‘strand of ‘epic theatricality.’ As I have said, regardless of their respective aesthetical and political idiosyncrasies, both *Revolução na América do Sul* and *A Mais Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar!* inaugurate new epic theatricalities as they present incongruous scenes by employing distancing techniques, creating estrangement, provoking laughter and, consequently, challenging the reader/spectator to think critically about the consequences of capitalistic development in Brazilian society.

⁵⁷ Similar to what happens in our study of *teatro de revista* in Portugal and Brazil – and our understanding that it would be interesting to think about [trans]revistas in various urban spaces where *revistas* flourished, I believe we think of Brecht or the use of Brechtian techniques in a *transepic*, i.e., it would be helpful to start analyzing these issues in a *transepic* way.

Revolução na América do Sul

Directed for the first time in 1960 by José Renato in Teatro de Arena in São Paulo, *Revolução* by Boal tells the story of José da Silva, an exploited and alienated working-class man struggling to keep himself and his family alive within extreme poverty. *Revolução* presents the lack of resources Silva encounters, as no government, friend, colleague, family member, or even guardian angel wants (or can) help him survive, despite his efforts to find solutions. Jobless and with no one to help him, he must look for food in prison or sell his vote during elections in exchange for basic needs and other benefits. Nothing works for Silva, and he ultimately dies of starvation. In this way, the play presents audiences with workers' precarious circumstances and the lack of social and economic support from the government and society.

Despite its title and its overall revolutionary tone, *Revolução* does not portray a revolution nor even the "rehearsing" of one. Instead, the play shows Boal's perspective regarding the need to organize and resist objective violence inflicted on the working class deprived of basic needs such as food. There is nonetheless something to say about the play's title, which is highly ironic and provocative. On the one hand, the play's title is not "Revolution in Brazil" but "in South America," which one can interpret as Boal's perspective that the portrayed reality is not particular to a specific place in the continent but one that could take place anywhere in the region. It also indicates that a revolution was necessary in South America. On the other hand, what one gathers from the play's plot (a non-cohesive succession of episodes) is not a revolutionary uprising. On the contrary, it gives voice to counterrevolution, since one only witnesses failed attempts to change the establishment and conditions of living (Roéfero 70).

Nevertheless, there are within *Revolução* a few references to the importance of organizing a revolution. None come from a conscious or politicized perspective; rather they come from the lack of options to respond to hunger and misery. Boal emphasizes these negative aspects and the characters' lack of consciousness and self-determination, something that he describes in his preface as a deliberate choice. For example, Boal warns his audience of the possibility of revolution in the beginning of the play:

Atenção
muita atenção
aviso à população
revolução
revolução
revolução
na América do Sul
cuidado minha gente
cuidado minha gente
que a revolução vai começar... (27)
[Attention
great attention
warning to the population
revolution
revolution
revolution
in South America
beware my people
beware my people

that the revolution is about to begin...]

In the first scene, *Por que motivo José da Silva pediu aumento de salário mínimo* [Why did José da Silva ask for a minimum wage increase], Silva and his colleague Zequinha talk about a revolution as the only way to solve the problem of their precarious life. Moreover, in scene four, *Como vedes, tornou-se inadiável a necessidade de uma revoluçãozinha* [As you see, the need for a little revolution has become unavoidable], there is a dialogue about the need to organize a revolution. The irony of the scene's title immediately denotes the quality of the type of uprising that the author anticipates—a small and irrelevant one. Revolution is written with the diminutive “*inha*,” *revoluçãozinha*, a suffix that we could translate from Portuguese into “little revolution” or “loving revolution.” However, several characters in the scene share a willingness to organize it. Zequinha appears as the revolution's leader, supported by the figure of the revolutionary, who questions his clothes, speech, plan, and intentions. Specifically, a main issue that Zequinha has on his agenda to present to others is his idea that this revolution will be different because it will be one of honesty:

ZEQUINHA: (Animado) O plano é o seguinte. O nosso povo passa fome. (...)

ZEQUINHA: Todo mundo é pobre, pobre, pobre de marré, marré de sim. E todas as revoluções falharam. Falharam por quê? Por quê?

PROSTITUTA: Sei lá eu.

ZEQUINHA: Muito simples: porque sim. Porque foram todas revoluções corruptas. Revoluções sem idéia. Mas a nossa, ah! A nossa revolução, essa sim, tem uma idéia, se chama: Honestidade.

REVOLUCIONÁRIO: O que é isso?

ZEQUINHA – A economia do país é devorada por amigos e inimigos, a nação está à beira da falência, e qual é a solução? A Revolução da Honestidade.

JOSÉ: Mas, o que é que vai mudar?

ZEQUINHA: Não vai mudar nada, vai ficar tudo como está.

JOSÉ: E qual é a diferença?

ZEQUINHA: Que diferença?

JOSÉ: Se a gente vai fazer uma revolução é pra mudar alguma coisa.

ZEQUINHA: Ah, claro. Vai mudar. Vai todo mundo ser honesto. (42)

[ZEQUINHA: (Cheerful) The plan is this. Our people are starving. (...)]

ZEQUINHA: Everybody is poor, poor, poor, marré de sim. And all revolutions have failed. Why did they fail? Why did they fail?

PROSTITUTE: I don't know.

ZEQUINHA: Very simple: because they did. Because they were all corrupt revolutions. Revolutions without an idea. But ours, ah! Our revolution, this one, has an idea, it's called: Honesty.

REVOLUTIONARY: What is it?

ZEQUINHA - The country's economy is devoured by friends and enemies, the nation is on the verge of bankruptcy, and what is the solution? The Honesty Revolution.

JOSE: But what will change?

ZEQUINHA: Nothing will change, everything will remain as it is.

JOSE: And what's the difference?

ZEQUINHA: What difference?

JOSE: If we are going to make a revolution it is to change something.

ZEQUINHA: Oh, of course. It will change. Everyone will be honest.]

In his speech, Zequinha criticizes the corruption of past revolutions and wants to promote honesty in people. Notwithstanding the absurdity of Zequinha's type of revolution – particularly if one considers the expected political contours of one – the most laughable moment of the scene is when the would-be participants in the revolution discuss the day and time of its launching. Presented with the option to start a revolution the next day at noon, they respond with mundane reasons for not doing so. *Revolucionário* [revolutionary] says that he cannot make it because he has to take his father to the train station, and *Outro Revolucionário* [Another Revolutionary] cannot make it at night because he has a date. To complete the scene, even the leader, Zequinha, cannot participate in the revolution in the middle of the night because his wife does not let him leave the house after dark. The scene ends when the police catch on to the situation, resulting in Silva's arrest and the end of any potential uprising. The whole scene is comical, particularly for a leftist audience that could easily identify the challenges of community organizing. It is only when the narrator appears in the last scene and tells the audience that Silva died from starvation that one sees Boal's somewhat timid call for action.

Through absurd and incongruous depiction of labor and social relations, Boal provokes laughter. He aims to develop an aesthetic yet critical theater production that inspires a political course of action outside the theatrical scenario. The narrator directly explains to the audience the difference between being in a theater where things “are not real” and being outside the theater – where there is hope and life, not death:

NARRADOR: José é um que morreu.

Mas vocês ainda não.

Aqui acaba a Revolução.

Lá fora começa a vida;
e a vida é compreender.

Ide embora, ide viver.

Podeis esquecer a peça

Deveis apenas lembrar
que se teatro é brincadeira,
lá fora...é pra valer.

(cantando enquanto sai.)

Lá se vão os governantes
aqui não fica ninguém

Fica o homem que morreu
e a mulher que diz amém. (117)

[NARRATOR: Jose is one who has died.

But you are not yet.

Here the Revolution ends.

Outside life begins;
and life is understanding.

Go away, go live.

You can forget the play
You must just remember

that if theater is play
outside... it's for real.

(singing as he leaves.)
So much for the rulers
No one stays here
There remains the man who died
and the woman who says amen.]

The message to the audience is clear: to forget the play – a *brincadeira* [the playing] – and remember that they are alive and should live their lives fully when they leave the theater – “*Lá fora começa a vida*” [Out there life begins]. More than a rehearsal for a revolution or call for action, *Revolução* mocks the revolutionary process, using humoristic aesthetics as important rhetorical tools to establish a critique of capitalism. In a context where several playwrights were addressing issues around the exploitation of the worker (particularly the factory worker) due to accelerated industrialization, Boal wished for his audience to see such critique in dialogue with other values. He intended to “*fotografar o desastre*” [photograph the disaster] (25) and, as one can infer from the play’s preface, he also wanted his audience to view the play primarily for its aesthetic value, without recourse to ethical judgment. He did not want to eliminate ethics from the play’s analysis, but he wanted to avoid reducing *Revolução* to it.

A critical element one finds in *Revolução* is the *Verfremdungseffekt* [distancing effect] – an effect that prevents the audience from identifying with the characters and the scenes portrayed in the plays. Boal was attentive to form and aesthetics as a fertile ground for the distancing effect. *Revolução* firmly establishes such attention via the scenes’ pivotal fragmentation and extensive titles, the use of music to comment on the scenes, the existence of a chorus, and the breaking of the fourth wall. Though partially linear, the scenes are disconnected, displaying social divisions with different segments scrutinizing the workers’ alienation process (73). Boal refused the idea of the play as an anarchic selection and combination of elements; the playwright saw it as a refined version of a piece whose initial writing stages comprised a circus scenario where all the characters were clowns. The play is divided into fifteen scenes with titles describing each scene’s events, without apparent connection between them. By reading the titles, however, one can infer the temporal development of its main events. Facing a theatrical representation of the violence and exploitation that the state and capitalists carry out against the poor, one feels compelled to act.

In *Explicação*, Boal affirms that modern theater should provoke the spectator to participate in a critique of class-based society. The life of José da Silva (as a metonym for the Brazilian people) catapults such criticism, and the fragmented nature of the play offers the spectator a (disconnected) overview of reality. When Silva loses his job (supposedly because his boss can no longer afford to pay his salary), the audience witnesses the struggle of the worker trying to feed his family. Silva looks for support everywhere. When he goes without food for fifteen days, he seeks aid from politicians. They look at him only as a voter, however, and promise help only in exchange for his vote and support during the elections. The exchange is clear: a vote for a job (Roéfero 182). In the meantime, the worker continues to survive without any means. The figure of Silva and his vote represent the electorate. The electorate is ignored most of the time and only matters when elections are coming up, at which point politicians perform just enough diligence to obtain votes (183). One ultimately comes to understand that Silva is not a politicized worker; he does not possess the energy to dedicate himself to collective action since his immediate struggle is hunger. Even though Boal did not choose to portray José as a politicized character, the play alienates readers/spectators and invites them to look critically at the consequences of economic “progress.”

The distancing effect of *Revolução* is also produced by a comical rhetoric, namely through a strong emphasis on absurd and incongruity in the play. This aspect contributes to the argument that, more than juxtaposing Brechtian distancing techniques (in which the comedic tone is not considered) with *teatro de revista*, the play depicts a local version of epic theater – uniquely “Brazilian” and distinct from what was produced in Germany during Brecht’s lifetime or in Portugal after 1974.⁵⁸ In Boal’s version, the absurd is among the most important rhetorical strategies used to expose the exploitation of the working class, the fraudulence of the electoral process, the outrageousness of political speeches/rhetoric, and the corruption conducted by politicians and their supporters in exchange for benefits (including political appointments). By ‘absurd’, I do not necessarily mean the philosophical notion that was identified in the work of playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco in the late 1950s that would become known as Theater of the Absurd. Although the “absurdist” plays take laughter and the comical as tools of criticism, they also often include nonsense and illogical speech to represent existentialist issues. In *Revolução*, the ‘absurd’ refers to the situations that challenge the audience’s expectations regarding a particular situation or scenario. In general, audiences tend to react when these expectations are unmet or exaggerated with laughter. This idea connects to the incongruity theory of humor. Initially developed by Immanuel Kant, the theory suggests that people laugh when a particular scene is incongruous (i.e., when a situation or a speech diverges from one’s assumptions). Such incongruity creates an absurd, comedic tone, which is also a hallmark of several scenes of *teatro de revista*:

São passagens cômicas na medida em que beiram o absurdo. Sabemos, evidentemente, que são exageros intencionais para evidenciar os níveis sobrenaturais a que chega a exploração e essa comicidade alcançada pelo exagero contribui com o distanciamento, porque ele nunca se dá em chave dramática, de modo a evidenciar o sofrimento, mas sim de modo a escancarar a desinformação e os processos de opressão que tornam possível a manutenção do status quo. É fácil concluirmos, portanto, que, embora seja exagero, não deixa de constituir similaridade com as estruturas de exploração que compõem a nossa realidade. (Roéfero 73)

[These are comic passages insofar as they border on the absurd. We know, of course, that they are intentional exaggerations to highlight the supernatural levels to which exploitation reaches, and this comicality achieved by the exaggeration contributes with the distancing, because it never happens in a dramatic key, in order to highlight the suffering, but rather in order to expose the misinformation and the processes of oppression that make possible the maintenance of the status quo. It is easy to conclude, therefore, that, although it is an exaggeration, it is still similar to the structures of exploitation that make up our reality.]

Thus, the rhetorical element of humor exacerbates the portrayed conditions and events in most *revistas*, whether they have subversive connotations or not. In any case, the absurdity of hyperbolic speech and exaggeration creates distance between the audience’s reality and the portrayed scenes, which is what we encounter in Boal’s play.

There are several scenes “bordering” the absurd in *Revolução*, all of which have the potential of provoking laughter. One of first scenes where we can identify this includes Silva paying a few cents to smell a dessert (with the main course, a luxury reserved for few) and trying

⁵⁸ In the aftermath of the Portuguese revolution of 1974, Grupo Ádoque created *revistas* that criticized the former regime and celebrated socialism.

to buy food at the market after his minimum wage increase only to find that prices have also increased. In the latter scene, cause and effect explain the raises. A blame game begins when Silva asks: "Então o que é que adianta aumentar o meu salário?" [So what's the point of increasing my salary?] (A. Boal 39). Some parties in the commodity distribution chain are represented in the dialogue and blame each other – the seller raised the price of oranges because transportation costs went up because tires got more expensive; tires got more expensive because rubber cost more; the boss raised the price of rubber because Silva asked for a higher salary; Silva asked for a raise because his wife told him to do so in order to feed their newborn, who was crying because he was hungry. The absurdity increases when Silva's baby is accused of "disorganizing the economy of the country" in the passage below:

PATRÃO: E o teu aumento quem é que dava?

JOSÉ: Então a culpa é minha?

FEIRANTE: Não foi você que pediu aumento? A culpa é sua, é claro que tem que ser.

PATRÃO: A culpa é toda sua que me pediu aumento primeiro! (*Sai o Patrão.*)

FEIRANTE: É. José da Silva, você é que tem culpa. (*José começa a rir*)

JOSÉ: Não, a culpa não é minha, não. Eu pedi aumento porque a minha mulher mandou eu pedir.

FEIRANTE: Então a culpa é dela.

JOSÉ: Também não é: ela mandou eu pedir, porque o nosso filhinho que nasceu ontem, estava chorando de fome. (*Faz gesto mostrando o menino pequenininho.*)

FEIRANTE: Que maravilha: então a culpa é do seu filho!

JOSÉ: Que garoto safado!

FEIRANTE: Que coisa extraordinária!

JOSÉ: Mal acabou de nascer e já está desorganizando as finanças dos pais (*Joga fora os gestos do menino.*) Nessa terra está tudo errado por causa do meu filho! Quando chegar em casa, vou-lhe dar uma surra que ele não vai esquecer.

FEIRANTE: (*Entusiasmado.*) Quebra a cara do menino em nome do bem-estar da nação!

JOSÉ: O governo devia baixar um decreto proibindo criança chorar quando tiver fome. Agora eu vou embora almoçar em casa. (40)

[BOSS: And who would give you your raise?

JOSE: So it's my fault?

MERCHANT: Weren't you the one who asked for the raise? It's your fault, of course it has to be.

BOSS: It's all your fault that you asked me for a raise first! (The Boss exits.)

MERCHANT: Yes, José da Silva, it's your fault, (José starts laughing)

JOSE: No, it's not my fault. I asked for a raise because my wife told me to.

MERCHANT: So it's her fault.

JOSE: Neither is it: she told me to ask for it, because our little boy, who was born yesterday, was crying from hunger.

MERCHANT: That's wonderful: so it's your son's fault!

JOSE: What a naughty boy!

MERCHANT: What an extraordinary thing!

JOSE: He's barely born and already he's messing up the country's finances (Throws away the boy's gestures.) In this land everything is wrong because of my son! When I get home I'm going to give him a beating he won't forget.

MERCHANT: (Enthusiastic.) Break the boy's face in the name of the welfare of the nation!

JOSE: The government should issue a decree forbidding children to cry when they're hungry. Now I'm leaving for lunch at home.]

The passage includes several absurd instances. First, the raise in salary is not enough for Silva to buy food; second, the comedic tone of the inflation blame; third, the lack of political consciousness or a critical approach to Silva's situation, which becomes even more absurd when he blames his newborn for the raised prices and says he will beat him up when he gets home. All these scenarios/situations reflect alienation and the objective violence within a system that exploits, marginalizes, and blames the working class. As Roéfero notes, the blame never falls upon the government or political and economic systems (181). The absurd conclusion is that a newborn carries the blame for the country's "dysfunctional" economy.

The absurd is also noteworthy in the portrait and behavior of the politicians and Silva's boss. In all the scenes in which they appear, their actions and speech are exaggerated. We can find one example in the passage below when the character *Líder* (the leader of the majority of the deputies) talks about the impossibility of attending a request from a sports representative due to the state of finances. The overemphasis strengthens when the character says that he might abandon politics because he can no longer "*arrancar mais dinheiro desse país*" [extract more money from this country]:

LÍDER: (*Sentando-se contrafeito.*) Vou logo avisando que não dá pé. O Estado está num estado lastimável! Os cofres públicos foram depredados. Nem mesmo eu consigo arrancar mais dinheiro desse país. Estou quase abandonando a política. (*Toda vez que se fala em dinheiro ele tenta fugir e é detido.*) (A. Boal 47)

LEADER: (*Sitting back down against his will.*) I'm warning you, it's no good. The State is in a terrible state! The public coffers have been plundered. Not even I can get any more money out of this country. I'm almost giving up politics. (*Every time money is mentioned, he tries to run away and gets arrested.*)

Boal introduces another example of the absurd when, in scene six, the leader defines politics and explains his view on society's structural division between those who work, those who play soccer, those who pray, those who raise children (women), and those who vote:

LÍDER: (*Depois de agradecer uma ligeira salva de palmas, curvando-se.*) Conterrâneos. O homem é um homem, e um gato é um bicho. Isto significa que hoje vamos fazer política (*Fazendo uma revelação*) Nós somos políticos. Porém...o que é a política? Política não significa trabalho, porque quem trabalha é o trabalhador, e o trabalhador se divide em operário e camponês, sendo considerados votantes apenas os maiores de dezoito anos. Política não é futebol, porque futebol é um esporte, e nós aqui estamos por profissão. Portanto, o trabalhador trabalha, o jogador faz gol, o padre reza, o condutor tlin-tlin, a mulher tem filho, o filho cresce e se transforma num belo eleitor. E os políticos...politicam. Porém, para o

bom desempenho das suas funções é necessário conhecer os princípios fundamentais da politicagem, que são em número de três, a saber: primeiro: vencer as eleições de qualquer maneira; segundo: não decepcionar os amigos; terceiro: iludir o povo. (*Discursa com base interior, seríssimo.*) Para vencer as eleições é preciso união, porque a união faz a força. Para não decepcionar os amigos, existem as autarquias. Para iludir o povo, é preciso muita bossa. (65)

[LEADER (*After acknowledging a slight round of applause, bowing.*) - Fellows. Man is a man, and a cat is a beast. This means that today we are going to do politics (Making a revelation) We are politicians. But... what is politics? Politics doesn't mean work, because the worker is the one who works, and the worker is divided into laborer and peasant, and only those over the age of eighteen are considered voters. Politics is not soccer, because soccer is a sport, and we are here by profession. So the worker works, the player scores a goal, the priest prays, the driver tlin-tlin, the wife has a child, the child grows up and becomes a fine voter. And the politicians...politicize. But to perform their functions well, it is necessary to know the fundamental principles of politicking, which are three in number, namely: first: win elections by any means; second: don't let your friends down; third: deceive the people. (Speaks from the inside, very serious.) To win elections, you need unity, because unity is strength. To not disappoint your friends, you have municipalities. To fool the people, you need a lot of skills/swing.]

In the passage, the leader defines politics as *politicagem*, something analogous to politicking, and he explains the basics of such activity, such as winning elections by any means, guaranteeing that all one's *amigos* (i.e., internal supporters) receive some position or compensation in exchange for their support in the electoral process, and deceiving the people. He also points out the importance of unity and alliances and ends the speech by saying: "*Para iludir o povo, é preciso muita bossa*" ["To fool the people, you need a lot of skills/swing"] (65). This is significant not just because it is absurd. In fact, it is not exactly the content of such affirmations that surprises the audience. The dialogues between the characters reveal their levels of corruption in many other scenes. However, the blunt statements in this scene create discomfort, a Brechtian distancing effect. How can spectators remain indifferent to such frankness? How can citizens remain silent in the face of the violent actions of those who govern solely for their own benefit? What will audience members do once they leave the theater?

Besides the absurd as a rhetorical strategy to produce a comedic tone, and like what one finds in *revistas*, most of *Revolução*'s characters are caricatures, or exaggerated portraits of real-life politicians and working people in South American societies at the time. Most scenes serve to estrange the audience. The interactions between the characters express their bizarre relations, particularly between politicians when discussing laws and between politicians and the people. As for Silva, he represents the working-class people who work and cannot get fundamental rights for themselves, an image of the violence then inflicted upon the Brazilian people (Roéfero 176). Nonetheless, Silva also acts as the *teatro de revista compère*, as he comments on the events and allows for a thread to be followed while maintaining an exaggerated representation of the alienated worker.

While *Revolução* "photographs" the sociopolitical and economic violence inflicted upon working-class people, its (positive) reception in 1960 was most obvious among middle-class audiences. The fact that the Teatro de Arena aimed to offer popular theater to the masses but ended up being a "success" among more privileged people distanced some practitioners, who began to question the leftist company and started to look for new possibilities more aligned with revolutionary theatrical practices (Roéfero 25). One of those practitioners was Vianninha, who asserted: "*via no Arena um teatro limitado, funcionando em Copacabana [...] para um público de elite. Para o CPC, o Arena era um teatro irremediavelmente pequeno-burguês*" [I saw in Arena a limited theater, functioning in Copacabana [...] for an elite public. For the CPC, Arena was a hopelessly petty-bourgeois theater.] (qtd. in Roéfero 25). Vianninha criticized Arena, not only because of its appeal to a middle-class audience but also because the company was self-sufficient and, therefore, did not have a more significant relationship with unions, political parties, and other entities that shared similar goals and were willing to work together (27).

Vianninha was dissatisfied with Arena's project and ended up joining the *Centro Popular de Cultura* (CPC), a cultural branch associated with *União Nacional de Estudantes* (UNE), launched in 1961/2 by leftist intellectuals and artists whose project was to produce a popular, more radical, engaged, and revolutionary art, as we have seen. Vianninha was looking for an alternative way of practicing theater. As a young theater practitioner and a militant in the Brazilian Communist Party, he sought an engaged theater, something that the CPC would end up materializing in experiments with agitprop. From the moment Vianninha left Arena, it was clear that he wanted to question the boundaries between art and society and, ultimately, as Paulo Bio Toledo tells us, establish a "*crítica ao conceito de arte como instituição autônoma e supra-histórica*" [criticism of the concept of art as an autonomous and supra-historical institution] (P. Toledo 207). Inspired by Erwin Piscator, he wanted to amplify the people's experiences by producing political theater as a new way of intervening in the world. The development of Vianninha's work at CPC followed the production of *A Mais-Valia vai Acabar, Seu Edgar!*, in 1960, when he was still connected to Teatro de Arena. While the play dialogues with *Revolução* in aspects such as the sociocultural context and ideological and aesthetical background, it is also very distinct in its sociological and economic approach. In addition, it signals the politicized aesthetics that CPC would explore.

A Mais-Valia vai Acabar, Seu Edgar!

A Mais-Valia portrays the journey of working-class men in understanding the reasons for their conditions and why they work incessantly, which makes them feel miserable about their lives. Vianninha did not give the workers names but instead identified them by social condition and numbers associated with them – *Desgraçado* 1, 2, 3, 4 and *Capitalista* 1, 2, 3. The numbers do not necessarily give them a dramatic and psychological dimension but allow the reader/spectator to identify specific aspects and actions and distinguish them. This is the case with *Desgraçado* 4 who, throughout the play, actively investigates the men's social condition and looks for answers to the question: "*por que existe lucro?*" [why does profit exist?]. Throughout the play, the audience witnesses the processes of learning and self-determination that *Desgraçado* 4 goes through to become conscious of his condition (220).

Like *Revolução*, *A Mais-Valia* hints at the revolutionary action, as one can see in *Desgraçado* 4's actions and in the play's title – *A Mais-Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar!* [The Surplus Value Is Going to End, Mr. Edgar!] – which is also the last line of the play. The beginning of the play presents the spectator with the harsh reality of poverty and exploitation. As

the play develops, the self-determination of the men who understand their condition and the suggestion in the concluding scene of a socioeconomic transformation become essential aspects of the playwright's intentions and approach to political theater. Such aspects contrast with *Revolução*, in which the characters never understand their condition from a politicized standpoint.

The overall accomplishment of the play was two-fold: to innovate as a theatrical and aesthetic piece and to question the social effects of economic profit. The didactic tone of the play resulted from Brecht's work and the experiences offered by the *Seminário de Dramaturgia* [Seminar in Dramaturgy] organized by Teatro de Arena in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Assis 100). As I have mentioned, the Brazilian versions of epic theatricalities developed then included formal elements from *Teatro de Revista* and burlesque which is also the case in *A Mais-Valia*. Additionally, the play also includes figurative language typically associated with comedy shows (which Vianninha was exposed to via his father's experience with radio, comedy theater, and *revistas*). While this is the case for the script in conjunction with Vianninha's stage directions, the influence of the *revista* genre, for example, would become even more significant with the director's choices for the play's first staging in 1960.

Chico de Assis directed the play but also invited several other young artists (such as the soon-to-be Cinema Novo figure Leon Hirszman) and thinkers (such as the sociology student Carlos Estevam Martins) to collaborate with the staging and complement Vianninha's nationalist and Marxist approach through cinematographic and sociological lenses. According to P. Toledo, the open rehearsals at the College of Architecture of Universidade do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro slowly started attracting architecture students, who contributed to the scenography of the play (Carvalho qtd. in Roéfero 225). The music of Carlos Lyra was also crucial for the poetics of the show, mainly if one thinks of it as a "political revue."

Assis aimed for aesthetic experimentation while following Erwin Piscator's epic directing – a militant and propagandistic approach that mobilized people (mostly workers) outside the bourgeois and more traditional theatrical spaces. Assis also wanted to create a more accessible type of theater and opted for the *revista* structure, in addition to some influences from cinema produced in the United States. The play became an exercise of intimacy as well as a lesson in economics, a revue-type *mise-en-scène*, an example of vanguardist staging aesthetics, and a politicized gaze over society. Together with *Revolução*, *A Mais-Valia* follows a Marxist approach by clearly establishing a critique of surplus value through Erwin Piscator's conception of political theater and epic distancing techniques — including a prologue-type scene, choruses, character types, linguistic deviation, metatheater, presence of a *compère*, and the absurd —, all of which contributing to a comedic tone that could potentially result in laughter.

The play begins with a prologue-type scene. Similar to the prologues in *Teatro de Revista*, the actors address the audience, talking about the play that is about to begin and introducing the characters and the formal aspects of *A Mais-Valia*. They express their intentions: they want to sing what they know despite the little they know and want to make the audience laugh despite no one being funny:

Queremos cantar o que sabemos,
apesar de pouco sabermos;
Queremos fazer vocês rirem
Da graça que ninguém tem. (Vianna Filho 16)
[We want to sing what we know
even though we know little;

We want to make you laugh
At how funny no one is.]

Following the prologue, the chorus – *Coro dos Desgraçados* [Wretched Chorus] – presents the plot, which interferes with the dramatic action and causes the estrangement proposed by Brecht. Having a 20th-century playwright resorting to a chorus might make the reader wonder about the connections between Vianninha’s work and Greek theater. Considering the overall structure of *A Mais-Valia*, and like what one finds in *Revolução*, the inclusion of a chorus is more likely to be related to the Brechtian use of such a rhetorical device. Now, the debate around the influence of Greek theater in Brecht’s theater is not new. Whether we identify such influence or not, it is plausible to assert, as did Martin Revermann, that “Brecht’s relationship with Greek tragedy is thus both dialogical and dialectical. Without Greek tragedy as a target and a model to work against, Brechtian drama would lack a vital means of creating its artistic autonomy and uniqueness.” (219) Such dialogical and dialectical relationship is also what allows us to pass the binaries of East/West, Capitalist/Communist, bourgeois/Marxist (231) and look at the interfaces between various theatrical traditions. For the most part, and according to the same author, Brecht’s use of choruses did not come from appropriating choral art forms existing in Greek tragedy (in which the chorus worked as an observer and a mediator between the stage and audience) or Japanese Noh. Rather, like other theatrical devices, Brecht’s choruses can achieve estrangement due to their anti-naturalistic and anti-realist dimensions. The choruses we encounter in the playwright’s work comment, narrate, and present the characters while breaking the dramatic action. They can be performed by one or more characters and contribute to establishing a type of theater that wants to awaken the audience through poetic and musical moments, i.e., art (Guarnieri 2015). In Vianninha’s play *Coro dos Desgraçados* is used to present *A Mais-Valia* on behalf of *desgraçados* (i.e., the miserable, wretched), disgraced people who have never stopped working – “*Há mil anos sem parar*” [A thousand years without stopping] (19). The lyrics are in the first person, “we,” and voice a reality of the workers who do nothing but work. There is an enumeration of things they have and have not done because they work incessantly, which makes them nameless, sad, and tired. The chorus also uses rhymes, repetition, and alliteration to set the tone for the play’s portrayal. In the line “*Eu nunca ri – eu nunca ri – sempre trabalhei*” [I’ve never laughed – I’ve never laughed – I’ve always worked] (20), for example, the subject equates seriousness with work and leisure with laughter. In this way, the play uses the chorus to depict the harsh reality of the workers.

From the first scenes, the play introduces character types – a common feature of *revista* – namely the *desgraçados* [wretched] (1, 2, 3, 4) and *capitalistas* [capitalists] (1, 2, 3). They are chosen based on their exploited conditions as workers and human beings (*desgraçados*) as opposed to their choices of exploiting workers to maintain privileges (*capitalistas*). In the first scene, the *desgraçados* are taking a break at work. They talk about how much they want their suffering and lack of rest to end. The stage directions remind audience members that they are in the theater by breaking the dramatic action with suggestions, including onstage costume changes and scenes (all of which produce distancing effects). The absurdity of the following scene/dialogue stems from the *desgraçados*’ request that the *capitalistas* add two minutes to the formers’ breaktime. The request is openly insignificant, but the boss denies it. The scene ends with the ridiculous reaction of the *Coro dos Capitalistas* [Capitalists’ Chorus] to the request, one that implies the workers’ additional break time is unnecessary and conducive to a life of doing nothing but eating, drinking, being with women, and stealing:

Parem!

Descanso pra viver no manso, comendo ganso, no remancho?
Pra beber quanto quiser, passar a mão em mulher, roubar minha colher? (Vianna Filho 25)

[Stop it!

Rest to live in the meek, eating goose, in the backwater?

To drink as much as you want, to hold hands with women, to steal my spoon?])

Considering that this was a response to a request for two extra minutes of breaktime, it is a purposeful exaggeration to show how detached from reality and exploitative the *capitalistas* are as a chorus and, thus, as a class.

There are several instances in the play where puns, double meanings, hyperbolic and ironic speech, metaphors, and linguistic deviation predominate, provoking laughter and creating a distancing effect between the scenes and the audience's experiences and assumptions. This effect occurs when the *capitalistas* decide to offer the country's happiest man a trip to the United States. To win it, people must participate in a contest and have the *capitalistas* interview them to assess their happiness level. Two major elements are meaningful: the US as a desirable destination, a "prize," indicating a critique of the country's imperialistic endeavors in 1960s Latin America, and the prize being awarded to the happiest man in the country, which is ironic, considering the life and destiny of the winner. In addition, the reader/spectator can immediately grasp the sarcasm of the voices in the background of the interview scene: "*Você é o homem mais feliz do país, infeliz? Você é o homem mais feliz do país, infeliz?*" [Are you the happiest man in the country, unfortunate? Are you the happiest man in the country, unfortunate?] (35). As one witnesses the interviews, it becomes clear that the lives of the interviewees (*Desgraçado 1, 2, and 3*) are anything but happy. Their lives are miserable, tiring, and a constant struggle.

In the middle of this scene, two *revista* techniques are used as distancing effects – metatheater or the presence of a *compère*. The metatheatrical scene breaks the dramatic action when *figurante 1, 2, 3, and 4* discuss that they are waiting in line to be interviewed as they had to wait to get in the theater:

FIGURANTE 1: Puxa, eu só entro nessa história para entrar em fila.

FIGURANTE 2: E pra vir pro teatro eu também entrei na fila

FIGURANTE 3: No mundo de hoje só tem fila.

FIGURANTE 4: Fila da mãe (36)

[EXTRA 1: Gee, I only enter this story to get in line.

EXTRA 2: And to come to the theater I also stood in line

EXTRA 3: In today's world there is only one line.

EXTRA 4: Mother's line]

After this exchange, *Desgraçado 4* acting as a *compère* when he addresses the audience before the *capitalistas* interview *Desgraçados 1, 2, and 3*. He distances himself as a character and explains that he is not participating in the scene because the author, a *principiante* [beginner, inexperienced], does not know what to do with him. Both instances and aesthetic choices mobilize the political content that the whole scene portrays.

After the *capitalistas* interview *Desgraçados 1, 2, and 3*, it becomes clear that they are competing to see which one is the most unhappy, which denounces these men's struggles and dispossession. *Desgraçado 2* receives the "prize" of going on a trip to the US, and *Coro do Homem Feliz* [Chorus of the Happy Man] justifies the choice by singing aspects of his life. The "winner" is someone who does not own anything or anyone. It is the life of a man who does not love, cry, think, or read (i.e., the life of a dispossessed man), and one can infer that he is already

dead, at least, in a societal sense. A specter destroyed by capitalistic forces, his supposed happiness is wholly ironic: “*Não ama, não chora, não pensa não lê: / É feliz! Feliz.*” [He does not love, does not cry, does not think, does not read: / He is happy! Happy.] (38).

As in *Revolução*, the absurd forms the raw material for the comedic tone, which one sees when, shortly after winning the prize, *Desgraçado 2* questions the meaning of happiness. In conversation with his coworkers, who congratulate him on the prize, *Desgraçado 2* explains that he cannot go on the trip because he is afraid of flying, does not know how to speak English, and cannot miss work. However, it is only when he expresses his sadness for not having anyone to tell what his new “label” means – “*isso daí que eu sou*” [that thing that I am] (41) – that it becomes clear that he is dying. Furthermore, he does not want to die before knowing what it means to be happy:

DESGRAÇADO 2: Eu estou triste com uma coisa...Não tenho ninguém pra contar que eu era isso daí que eu sou. Só o Zeca Maria. Mas o Zeca Maria eu não conheci. Ai. Está tudo ficando frio, frio. Me digam uma coisa. A última coisa.

DESGRAÇADO 3: Fala, feliz, fala.

DESGRAÇADO 2: O que é que quer dizer feliz? (Morre. Se entreolham. D3 toca violino.)

DESGRAÇADO 1: Feliz quer dizer sol amarelo tostando na cara da gente. Quer dizer... (Se entreolham.) Feliz, morreu.

DESGRAÇADO 3: Morreu, feliz.

(D1 acende uma vela e põe na mão de D2.)

DESGRAÇADO 2: (ao público) Puxa! Ainda vão queimar minha mão? (Morre.) (41)

[DESGRAÇADO 2: I’m sad about something... I don’t have anyone to tell me that I was what I am. Only Zeca Maria. But I never met Zeca Maria. Oh. Everything is getting cold, cold. Tell me something. The last thing.

DESGRAÇADO 3: Speak, happy, speak.

DESGRAÇADO 2: What does happy mean? (Dies. They look at each other. W3 plays the violin)

DESGRAÇADO 1: Happy means yellow sun toasting on our faces. It means... (They look at each other.) Happy, he’s dead.

DESGRAÇADO 3: He’s dead, happy.

(W1 lights a candle and puts it in W2’s hand)

DESGRAÇADO 2: (to the audience) Oh, man, are you going to burn my hand? (Dies.)]

In the passage, one sees the absurd at play, potentially causing laughter to the audience. The character who is supposed to be the happiest man in the country does not know what “happy” means, but his last wish before death is, precisely, to know it. Accordingly, the repetition of the word *feliz* [happy] and the wordplay “*Feliz, morreu. / Morreu, feliz*” [Happy, he’s dead. He’s dead, happy] teases the reader/spectator to consider the meaning of happiness and those who are privileged to access it. This implication is reinforced by the only definition that *Desgraçado 2* receives seconds after – “*Feliz quer dizer sol amarelo tostando na cara da gente,*” [Happy means yellow sun toasting on our faces] which means that to be happy is to work incessantly. In this regard, the scene creates estrangement as it reminds the reader/audience that they are in a theatrical space where things and situations can only be rehearsed and critically approached.

After dying, for example, *Desgraçado 2* reacts to a stage prop (a candle in the hand of his “dead” body) by addressing the crowd, “*Puxa! Ainda vão queimar minha mão?*” [Damn! Are you also burning my hand?], after which he dies again. The audience then concludes that this man is, in fact, the unhappiest man in the country as, even dead, he is not left alone to rest.

The death of *Desgraçado 2* incites *Desgraçado 3* to understand the root of his pain as a worker – the stomach pain, the chest pain, the pain that “hurts inside” – and one sees the unfolding of the research that the character undertakes. At this point, he continues his investigation of the existence of profit and is determined to do everything he can to find answers: “*Ou eu acabo com o lucro ou o lucro acaba comigo! (...) Descobrirei ou não de onde vem o lucro?*” [Either I end profit or profit ends me! (...) Will I find out where profit comes from or not?] (54). In another scene, he realizes that those who profit are not the workers. When he attempts to buy an expensive car with the last letter written by his deceased grandmother (under the premise that the letter is worth more than the price of the vehicle), he begins questioning the value of things. The scene is arguably one of the most risible parts of the play, and, despite the laughter that the dialogue between the seller and *Desgraçado 4* may cause, it makes one question the value of things and, ultimately, provokes a didactic investigation of capitalism. Afterward, the worker leaves the site understanding the relation between buying and selling commodities and rephrases the initial question about profit to “*O que será que determina o valor da mercadoria? Como é que a gente mede o valor da mercadoria?*” [What determines the value of a commodity? How do we measure the value of a commodity?] (59).

Vianninha “interrupts” the worker’s investigation to intervene. The character “Sujeito,” who acts like *revista*’s *compère*, addresses the audience, making comments about the play and directly criticizing the playwright for his inexperience and flaws:

SUJEITO: Com licença. Como a peça, escrita por um principiante, tem explicação que não acaba nunca e muito pouco riso, eu fui encarregado pela companhia de fazer alguma graça aos senhores para levantar o ânimo do público. (...) Muito obrigado. (...) Vejam se isso tem graça! Principiante! (60)

[INDIVIDUAL: Excuse me. Since the play, written by a beginner, has an explanation that never ends and very little laughter, I was commissioned by the company to make a joke for you to lift the audience’s spirits. (...) Thank you very much. (...) See if this is funny! Beginner!]

Significantly, this critique also points out that the play contains too many explanations (thus, it is less entertaining) and not many instances of laughter. Therefore, this passage uses metatheater to tell the reader/spectator that this play is not mere entertainment (though neither Brecht nor Vianninha reject the entertaining aspect of a theatrical performance), creating a distancing effect and preparing the audience for the next scene, in which the value of commodities is the theme of an Economics congress.

The congress is called the “*Congresso dos Sábios Economistas – valor das mercadorias e preço*” [Congress of the Wise Economists – commodities value and price]. The respective scene provokes laughter because, among other aspects, the supposed “wise economists” are all extremely old (presenting signs of dementia) and represent conservative and absurd economic solutions. In poor health, shown by the fact that they all have nurses accompanying them, they pause the conversations to go to the bathroom and rest, and one even dies during the congress. Moreover, the resolutions around the central question of the congress – what determines the value of a commodity? – are entirely ridiculous and incongruous with what one would expect

from “wise economists,” an already ironic expression. Among the things they say is that the price tag determines value, which leads to a resolution to raise the “*numerinho*” [little number] on the tag. In the context of the play, the congress scene clearly shows that the economists who define the country’s economy are old and incapable of defining things. It also represents an obsolete, conservative, and arbitrary version of economics and an irresponsible attitude toward people.

The conservatism of the old economists contrasts with the interventions of the character *Moço* [boy], who contends that the value of commodities is determined by the work time used in manufacturing, adding that the workforce has become a commodity, the source of profit (63-64). *Moço* confronts the old economists, saying that profit is the exploitation of the worker, and the audience is faced with a Marxist approach to economics and social organization. The Marxist tone is confirmed when *Moço* says he wants to read a thesis from a colleague of his who cannot be present because he lives in Germany and is already dead. Besides the incongruity of the statement that once again provokes laughter, the character also cites Karl Marx (directly from the German theorist’s lecture series in 1865 and now compiled in *Value, Price, and Profit*) and refers to him as colleague “Karlão.” It becomes evident that *Moço* represents a younger, more educated, and progressive generation possessing the language to challenge the old and conservative ones. Moreover, by witnessing the discussions around a commodity’s value, *Desgraçado 4* understands he is being exploited by the capitalist class, giving him the urge to tell his coworkers about it.

To show *Desgraçado 1* what he now knows, *Desgraçado 4* suggests taking him to an imaginary place where they can buy things with the amount of time it took to produce them. He explains to *Desgraçado 1* that he can only buy what he typically buys with his salary. At the door of the imagined place (a fair), the workers are told the number of hours they work (eight) and receive bills representing those hours. *Desgraçado 1* starts buying in exchange for his work hours. He never buys the most expensive things because he would not buy them in real life, even though their value at the fair is equivalent to the number of work hours he “possesses” in his hands. He starts to get disappointed and uninterested because he cannot buy anything and has only spent two of the eight hours he had before deciding to save the six hours of work left to buy more things later. The doorman tells him those hours stay with the fair organization by “regulation,” to which *Desgraçado 1* responds that the imaginary situation is stupid. *Desgraçado 4* didactically answers that he is a commodity, that his labor power is a commodity and has the value of the labor time it takes to make it:

DESGRAÇADO 4: Nossa força de trabalho vale o tempo de trabalho que gastam pra fazer as coisas que a gente come, veste...E agora você viu...Isso vale duas horas...você trabalha oito. As seis horas que sobram eles embolsam. Tudo é vendido pelo valor certinho...só que é vendido. Tem dono e endereço direitinho. (73)

[DESGRAÇADO 4: Our labor force is worth the labor time they spend making the things we eat, wear...And now you see...That’s worth two hours...you work eight. The six hours that are left they pocket. Everything is sold for the right price...it’s just sold. It has a right owner and a right address.]

Desgraçado 4 is now aware that they are selling their working time and that only a part of that time is necessary to earn a living, leaving the rest of their production, i.e., the surplus-value, to the capitalists.

Toward the end of the play, the audience is left with two concurrent ideas that reflect on real life. One is a meta-discourse about the didactic purpose of the playwright, which reminds them that they are in the theater and meant to reflect critically on the performance. The other is a confirmation that the capitalists understand that the workers' exploitation allows them to live a luxurious life and own property and capital that they can invest and use to maintain businesses (such as a factory). The two aspects merge when the workers assert that the surplus value must end. The capitalists call the situation subversive and attempt to arrest *Desgraçado 4*, which does not happen because his labor is essential. After highlighting how dependent the capitalist class is on working-class labor, the play ends. *Sujeito*, like a *compère*, addresses the audience with his body behind the curtain and his face looking at the people and says: "*A mais-valia vai acabar, seu Edgar!*" [The surplus value is going to end, Mr. Edgar!]. This is significant not only in its relation to the title but also in its revolutionary tone. The play postulates that the exploitation will end when workers understand what their work represents and how much the capitalist class needs them. In sum, with this ending, Vianninha's play demonstrates the importance of education and self-determination of the working class to fight against exploitation. This ending also gives room for a possible rebellion and/or revolution.

Conclusion

Teatro de Revista Brasileiro is paradigmatic of how laughter was framed in theatrical scenarios during the various regimes of the twentieth century, as *revistas* ushered in the social dramas that became known as "modern theater" in Brazil in the first half of the century. *Revista* techniques of this period were at the core of several plays later labeled as "modern," namely the dramatic productions between the 1950s and the 1960s. Similar to the Portuguese version, *revista* in Brazil observed and mirrored – through laughter – the political reality of the twentieth century, particularly the Vargas Era and its aftermath, up until the beginning of the military dictatorship in 1964, a regime that would last until 1985. Even after its climax between the late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth, *revista* continued to influence so-called modern theater, and laughter retained its significance as a crucial part of the theater experience.

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated that the Brazilian playwrights Boal and Vianninha were active members of a leftist intelligentsia that aimed to establish an anti-capitalist critique of Brazilian society while advancing their own epic theatricalities before the coup d'état of 1964. At the time, several foreign drama theories and dramatists were influencing the Brazilian dramatic landscape, including Brecht. The German playwright had developed his version of epic theater in the context of war and repression and had been influenced by several aesthetics and schools of thought (from cabaret to Marxism). Brecht wanted his theater to entertain but also intervene and change the world. For that, he created and somewhat systematized distancing techniques that alienated the spectators from the stage scenes and made them want to take action in the world. From his contact with the tradition of German clowning and cabaret, Brecht saw the transgressive power of humor to do so. Without producing comedies in an Aristotelian sense, he extensively used the dialectical structure of the comic and the absurd as triggers to critical thought. Brecht also realized that the relationship between the comic and music was crucial to achieving estrangement. Likewise, humor and music/choruses became essential for developing a Brazilian tradition of epic theater, which I have demonstrated through the analysis of Boal and Vianninha's plays – *Revolução na América do Sul* and *A Mais-Valia Vai Acabar, Seu Edgar!*, respectively.

In this chapter, I have also advanced that these plays show that the Brazilian playwrights include local popular musical theater in their conception of epic theater. The research about both plays often takes us to the myriad of critics that have identified Brechtian distancing techniques in the plays and dismissed the importance of revue theater tradition. Less often, we encounter studies that acknowledge the juxtaposition of such practices and *revistas*. Like Brecht, Boal and Vianninha produced plays and theoretical work based on a collage of different dramatic traditions, always attentive to their respective sociopolitical and cultural contexts. In fact, upon analyzing Boal and Vianninha's plays, it is challenging to categorically identify what is "Brechtian" and what is "*revisteiro* [revista-like]." In this sense, it is necessary to consider the ambiguity part of the constitution of both traditions and the end goal of each one.

It was paramount to turn to the dramatic texts themselves to see what they reveal about the Brazilian epic theatricalities in the early 1960s. The analysis of *Revolução* showed us that the play establishes a critique of capitalism through a mockery of the revolutionary process. Boal did not necessarily want to create a didactic play solely focused on ethics, so he dedicated his efforts to the aesthetic value of the play. For that, he used epic distancing effects such as fragmentation, scene titles, music, choruses, and commentary, among other techniques that resulted in breaking the fourth wall. Moreover, *Revolução* also extensively used most characters' absurd and caricatured portrayals to create incongruity, laughter, and distancing. The play shares similarities with *A Mais-Valia* concerning the socio-cultural context, the ideological and aesthetical background of the authors, and the advancement of a "Brazilian" conception of epic theater. However, as we have seen, Vianninha was highly committed to a more politicized, radical version of such a conception. Thus, throughout the chapter, I have shown how *A Mais-Valia* conciliated the intent of innovating as a theatrical and aesthetic piece and a critique of the social effect of economic profit. Following a Marxist approach concerning a direct critique of surplus value, the play includes various techniques such as prologue-type scenes, choruses, character types, linguistic deviation, and metatheater, among others. Additionally, and like *Revolução*, *A Mais-Valia* substantially used absurd and incongruous scenes that contributed to a comedic tone that had the potential of resulting in laughter and, thus, distancing.

Overall, I hope that this chapter has contributed to advancing a new reading of how Brazilian playwrights cocreated new and liminal theatricalities or a local version of epic theater before 1964 – one that, by including *teatro de revista* techniques, somewhat "cannibalized" (as Andrade would say) the contextualized aesthetical collage proposed by Brecht in Central Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Additionally, I hope this chapter sets the conditions for our understanding of how scenarios of laughter post-1964 coup gained new contours, which I will explore in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Laughter and Satire post-1964 in *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* (1966) by Oduvaldo Vianna Filho and Ferreira Gullar

The plays and *scenarios* of laughter in the previous chapter point to the development of Brazilian epic theatricalities in the period that preceded a major political shift in Brazil. In this chapter, I investigate the theatrical resistance that emerged in the period immediately after the beginning of the military dictatorship (1964–68). In the first section, I explore the sociopolitical context of authoritarianism and how it affected theater productions at the time. Like before the coup, theater practitioners organized themselves and created groups and projects, but afterward they sought ways to transform the theater into a space of political resistance against repression. Given this, I also examine the contours of cultural production under dictatorial regimes to understand the array of epic theatricalities used in mid-twentieth-century Brazilian theater, particularly in works produced by leftist practitioners.

Among leftist theater practitioners in Brazil, Grupo Opinião stands out as a collective that explored new scenic languages and new theatrical techniques while focusing on resisting the oppression under which they were living. For that reason, in the second section I focus on Opinião to show how this group used laughter and reflections about the Northeast region of Brazil in their conception and development of new theatricalities that were more in agreement (aesthetically and contextually) with Brazilian reality. I focus my examination on Vianna Filho (Vianninha) and Gullar's *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* (1966), a play that introduces popular musical, rhythmic, and rhetorical devices such as those used in *literatura de cordel* in conversation with Brechtian epic theater. I demonstrate that, with this play, Opinião aimed to create laughable and satirical scenes to expose the clash (or impasse) between political abuse supported by corrupt Brazilian institutions and power structures on one hand, and the need for social, cultural, and political change on the other.

The Military Regime and its Theatricalities

It is noteworthy that the Brazilian military regime never ignored the importance of cultural production. On the contrary, there were government-sponsored programs and institutions specifically tasked with promoting and consolidating a homogenized and official conception of Brazilian identity. Repressive policies also strengthened the state censorship apparatus against cultural production that was considered subversive or anti-regime. In addition, the various phases of the regime oversaw investments in communication infrastructure (such as radio and television) that supported a national modernization project that had begun decades before, of which the construction of Brasilia was an iconic example. The various administrations' political and ideological projects worked hand in hand with the country's cultural industry, despite the nonlinear and non-homogeneous contours of the policies promoted over the span of the dictatorship (1964-1985). In the years between the overthrow of President João Goulart in the 1964 military coup and the proclamation of the *Ato Institucional Número Cinco* (AI-5) [Institutional Act Number Five] in 1968—which hardened the repressive apparatus—theater in Brazil was prolific and attentive to the social turmoil of the period.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ In December of 1968, Costa e Silva's administration approved Institutional Act No. 5. This act strengthened executive power, decreased judicial power, limited individual freedoms, strengthened law enforcement, and

Like official censorship in Portugal, the post-AI5 Brazilian state apparatus pre-censored theatrical texts by cutting words and scenes, even going so far as to completely prohibit certain works or indefinitely postpone their approval (Fernandes 176). The *Serviço de Censura* had the power to censor any type of work considered subversive or offensive to the morals of the regime. Even when the plays were “cleared,” authorities attended dress rehearsals and had the power to cancel the show (Damasceno 116). In broad strokes, one can presume that most of the censored works did not align with the view of Brazilian culture envisioned by the 1966 *Conselho Federal de Cultura* or the 1973 national cultural plan that resulted in the *Diretrizes para uma Política Nacional de Cultura* (Directives for a national cultural policy). The explicit purpose of these national plans was to create archives, libraries, museums, folklore, and other spaces and practices in most municipalities to reinforce tradition and local idiosyncrasies as well as promote the preservation of the historical and cultural patrimony (Fernandes 183).

Moreover, there was a clear ideological division between hard and soft power. Conservative forces on the right controlled the former, and leftist (and in some cases progressive) sectors of Brazilian society controlled the latter. Even though Brazil was under a right-wing dictatorship that controlled the media and the corporate world, and as Roberto Schwarz has pointed out the left was relatively hegemonic in the cultural realm:

(...) o seu domínio, salvo engano, concentra-se nos grupos diretamente ligados à produção ideológica, tais como estudantes, artistas, jornalistas, parte dos sociólogos e economistas, a parte raciocinante do clero, arquitetos etc., - mas daí não sai, nem pode sair, por razões policiais. Os intelectuais são de esquerda, e as matérias que preparam de um lado para as comissões do governo ou do grande capital, e do outro para as rádios, televisões e os jornais do país, não são. É de esquerda somente a matéria que o grupo - numeroso a ponto de formar um bom mercado - produz para consumo próprio. (62)

[(...) its domain, unless I am mistaken, is concentrated in the groups directly linked to ideological production, such as students, artists, journalists, part of the sociologists and economists, the reasoning part of the clergy, architects, etc. - but it doesn't go beyond this, no can it, for reasons of law enforcement. The intellectuals are leftist, and the material they prepare on one side for the government or big capital commissions, and on the other side for the radio, television and newspapers of the country, are not. Only the material that the group—so numerous as to form a viable market—produces for its own consumption is leftist.]

It is essential to keep in mind, however, that even with this more or less stable division of power, the Brazilian intelligentsia—especially those not aligned with the regime—regularly suffered arbitrary processes of censorship, imprisonment, and torture. Some of its members were also forced into exile. From this it follows that even “leftist theater” in Brazil found itself profoundly conditioned by state repression both before and after AI5.

Between 1964 and 1968, Brazilian theater had continued to innovate in terms of aesthetics, and one of these innovations involved producing shows that used music and verse to create a farce-like atmosphere. Practitioners wanted “to make political statements in theater and [...] to have public discussions about theater’s role as contestation against the coup” (Damasceno 116), so they also used popular themes as metatheatrical tools to establish political parallels

suspended *habeas corpus*. The act also entailed strong institutional censorship and the imprisonment, torture, and persecution of those who opposed the regime.

(120). The use of music in Brazilian dramatic theater, as well as dramatic techniques and aesthetics associated with *teatro de revista* (as well as other types of musicals), merged with a desire to respond to and criticize the military regime. As Fernando Marques articulates in his analysis of Brazilian musical and political theater during the period: “O espetáculo cantado reviveu na fase de 1964 a 1979, dessa vez sob o influxo do momento político. Partimos da constatação de que o teatro brasileiro frequentemente se organizou na forma do musical para responder ao regime autoritário, fustigando-o com melodias e humor; ao mesmo tempo, delineou imagens do país que, em certos casos, permanecem exatas” [Musical shows came back during the period from 1964 to 1979, this time shaped by the political moment. We begin from the observation that Brazilian theater often organized itself in the form of the musical to respond to the authoritarian regime, buffeting it with melodies and humor; at the same time, it delineated images of the country that, in some cases, remain accurate.] (11). Despite the authoritarian regime’s censorship, many elements of musical theater persisted in Brazilian drama, aided by the expansion of new media. Alongside revue theater, the impact of Broadway, including the great success of the play *My Fair Lady* (imported by the producers Oscar Ornstein and Victor Berbara) led to the casting of prominent figures such as Bibi Ferreira and Paulo Autran (Sousa 171). In addition to American influence on the Brazilian theatrical scene during the dictatorship, several other shows and groups used MPB (Música Popular Brasileira [Brazilian Popular Music]) to develop a kind of political musical theater (172). Their aesthetics and formal choices could partially get around censorship that was often focused on a less “entertaining” type of theater. Some examples include Boal’s 1960s series *Arena Conta...* or Chico Buarque’s *Ópera do Malandro* (1978).

The development of musical theater in response to the regime became fertile ground for local epic theatricalities to flourish, a trend that Vianninha and Boal had been following years before the coup, as one can see in *Revolução* and *A Mais-Valia*. Moreover, the now intensified leftist political mobilization rekindled the Brechtian epic conception of theater. From the 1960s on, this took the form of a reinterpretation of Brecht’s work and a maturation of a certain ideological approach to Brazilian society in the context of the military dictatorship. As F. Marques reminds us, several authors and playwrights (including Vianninha) were more ideologically mature at this point. They did not want to continue idealizing the working class or develop a didactic style (F. Marques 20), as they had done years before. Some of them fostered a combination of theater and music with a reinterpretation of political theater (and agitprop)—reinforced by an emphasis on humor, laughter, and popular literature from other regions of the country, but especially from the Northeast.

An important collective theatrical project of the period was Teatro Oficina and the work developed by author, director, and actor José Celso Martinez Corrêa (commonly known as Zé Celso). Encompassing a review of traditional aesthetic mechanisms used to interpret texts—in terms of staging and scenography, music, makeup, and costumes—and using Jerzy Grotowski and Antonin Artaud, among others, as references, Teatro Oficina experimented with techniques of the grotesque and Artaud’s conception of the theater of cruelty. One of the most important of Celso’s productions was the 1967 staging of *O Rei da Vela*, a play written in 1933 by Andrade. This production helped develop several forms of Brazilian stagecraft (George 74). While Brazilian modernists had not previously stood out in the theatrical field, Celso’s 1967 production of Andrade’s play changed this. A fable about a candle maker and a loan shark, the play centers on the coffee crisis in Brazil that followed the economic upheaval of 1929. It denounces the subservience of both the rural aristocracy and the industrial bourgeoisie to the influx of foreign

capital. As far as modernity is concerned, the characters' social, personal, and economic relationships also call into question the common notion of Brazil's *atraso* (backwardness). Divided into three acts, the play introduces the American, Mr. Jones, who speaks the play's last line ("Oh! Good business!") and points to the Brazilian economy's dependence on North American capital. By contrast, the characters Abelard I and Abelard II represent Brazil's industrial, usurious bourgeoisie, and the subservient, careerist and available petty bourgeoisie respectively, both of which are under the control of Mr. Jones (Lima 19). The plot inaugurates a new narrative about Brazil, drawing attention not only to its troubled political and economic situation during the Vargas government but also to discourses on race, gender, and sexuality, with characters like Heloísa de Lesbos and Dona Cesarina challenging the conventions of heteronormativity. Moreover, it does not follow a classical dramatic structure in its treatment of the characters; rather, the script privileges comedy, farce, and parade-like features, giving the play a melodramatic feel, which is nonetheless toned down by its implementation of circus elements (I. C. Costa 151).

With staging by Celso, scenography and makeup work by Helio Eichbauer, and music by Caetano Veloso, the production went far beyond Andrade's text. Influenced by Andrade's notion of *Antropofagia*, foreign currents, and international counterculture, it surprised and scandalized its bourgeois audience. Intended to shatter establishment sensibilities, the play's deconstruction of the body broke with any sense of social convention. Body, makeup, and voice needed to be alive, undisciplined, and would come out of the entrails of what makes up the human being, as a sort of purge. The text no longer assumed the central role, with the theatrical strangeness coming from the aesthetics of the production. Freedom of expression, carnality, and a parody of academicism dominated the production. Celso wanted to take anthropophagic inspiration to the extreme, gathering elements like blood and guts as an attempt to metaphorically "eat" conventions, "isms," the stage, and the spectators. *O Rei da Vela* ended up shocking petty-bourgeois audiences. The *Comando de Caça aos Comunistas* [Communist-Hunting Squad] quickly censored it (Lima 22) and had the montage destroyed. The play would be staged later but with substantial changes that satisfied the state censorship apparatus. The theatrical experience of 1967—which revisited the modernist project of challenging Eurocentric readings of Brazilian culture—captured the continuities and discontinuities of both left- and right-wing Brazilian intellectuals and reflected the role of *Antropofagia* in artistic experience. Celso proved that the stage is not the sole and exclusive venue of contradictions and ambiguities of identity and social transformation, and that the daily life of combative bodies transposes the barriers of power reinforced by myths that perpetuate the invisibility of the dispossessed. Humor, parody, anarchy, *revista*, the circus, the absurd, and irony were all combined to show, metonymically, the socioeconomic context of 1960s Brazil and to radicalize theatrical production, which was heavily marked by a didactic and at times formulaic revolutionary approach.

Even though the 1967 staging of *O Rei da Vela* was an overall success and marked a critical moment of rupture in the Brazilian theatrical scene (where humor and laughter were essential elements of subversion), critics such as Décio de Almeida Prado and Alberto D'Aversa panned it. Prado was openly anti-Marxist, and he considered the play—in both its textual and performative dimensions—to be more concerned with bourgeois values and old aesthetics than with anti-capitalist critique and avant-garde features. That said, Prado did acknowledge some "positive" traits in the play, namely certain comic, grotesque, and parodistic elements (I. C. Costa 171). As for D'Aversa, he pointed out the play's obsolete characteristics and the "outdated" use of *revista* features, as I. C. Costa highlights: "It may have been the first time in

Brazil that a theater critic challenged the audience and performers of a comedy to think about the object of their laughter, indicating the class prejudices it may involve. And in doing so, he unequivocally points out the bad taste practiced and propagated by Teatro Oficina: *Áulico*” (173). In other words, Prado and D’Aversa argued that the supposed anti-bourgeois contours of *O Rei da Vela* and Celso’s staging were more connected to a bohemian and “marginal” approach (since it is a mockery of both the Social Democrats and the Communists) than to a revolutionary theater rooted in class struggle. In any case, the interactions between the characters representing Social Democrats and Communists are all unmistakably allegorical, given that “everyone was still focused on 1964” (I. C. Costa 175).

As Rafael Litvin Villas Bôas argues, there was a soft tension—a sort of “complementary antagonism”—between the right and the left after the 1964 coup. As he explains it, the right-wing dictatorship effectively commodified anti-establishment cultural production, a fact that stifled effective critique and refocused debate on the “value” of theatrical productions (220). In this way, the regime paradoxically increased the cultural capital of leftist theater while seeking to blunt its political effectiveness: “a production threatened by the Comando de Caça aos Comunistas (CCC) acquired a certain prestige with the left” (Bôas 220). This paradox is central if one is to understand the impact of plays produced in the context of Brazil’s repressive state regime. The political instrumentalization and persecution of Andrade and Celso’s work, along with the critical voices that did not consider the project of Teatro Oficina to be sufficiently revolutionary or vanguardist are important matters of context. That said, I would argue that it is precisely through the use of humor—in an explicitly anthropophagous and popularizing theatrical framework—that the 1967 production of *O Rei da Vela* nonetheless managed to challenge the socio-political status quo. In this sense, the production links to my overall argument that one cannot fully understand the development of twentieth-century Portuguese and Brazilian theater without acknowledging their turn to popular musical theater (particularly the comedic genre of revue) as a mechanism of response to state repression.

In 1968, Celso staged *Roda Viva* in Rio de Janeiro’s Teatro Princesa Isabel. The play was written by Buarque, then a young composer. The critical debate around Buarque’s play has been polarizing. Although the script and the staging tend to be analyzed separately, studying *Roda Viva* as a whole means analyzing its contradictions and omissions, as well as new elements that resulted from Celso’s production. The plot of *Roda Viva*, which features numerous references to the context of its production, revolves around the figure of Benedito Silva, a popular artist who becomes the target of manipulation by the cultural industry and consumerist society. These forces are materialized in the character of the antagonist, Anjo da Guarda, a type of agent/entrepreneur, and the figure of Capeta who personifies the media, including the television market. The change of the protagonist’s name to Ben Silver is a nod to the debate that existed at the time over the assimilation of Brazilian artists within a globalized entertainment industry dominated by English-speaking North Americans. Additionally, the subsequent transformation of the protagonist into Benedito Lampião exposes the investment of that industry in the Brazilian cultural market. Buarque’s text reveals how the music industry became conditioned by the capitalist system ruled by businessmen. The character Anjo at first wants to launch Benedito’s career but then ends up abandoning him and, finally, induces his death. The singer becomes a martyr, thereby making possible the accumulation of capital associated with his disappearance from the market. Peremptorily, and starting from a dialectical Marxist matrix, the play demonstrates how Benedito is objectified, valued only for his popularity and the resulting accumulation of capital. With few instructions for the director, the play adapts Brecht’s epic

form, breaking the fourth wall through comments on what is happening and a chorus that functions collectively to represent the people. Textual explanation also appears in Buarque's songs for the play, the lyrics of which have an effect of estrangement. The play's lyrics point to the impossibility of individual and collective emancipation, a consequence of the machine ("*roda viva*" [living wheel]) that then commanded the lives of all Brazilians: "Tem dias que a gente se sente/Como quem partiu ou morreu/A gente estancou de repente/Ou foi o mundo então que cresceu/A gente quer ter voz ativa/No nosso destino mandar/Mas eis que chega a roda vida/E carrega o destino pra lá" [There are days when we feel/As if we've left or died/We suddenly stopped/Or was it the world that grew up/We want to have an active voice/Our destiny to command/But then the living wheel arrives/Bears our destiny there.].

As he did with *O Rei da Vela*, Celso, in collaboration with renowned costume designer Flávio Império and with Buarque himself, imprinted an avant-garde scenic language on the staging of *Roda Viva*, complementing the epic devices contained in the script with features from Artaud's theater of cruelty. The sets and costumes, as well as the makeup and sound design, invited viewers to question the regime's moral and religious foundations. This led censors to ban the play, and groups from the *Comando de Caça aos Comunistas* in São Paulo and Porto Alegre attacked it as subversive, aggressive, and degrading. While this type of theater echoed Brecht's critique of Aristotelian drama and the interactions between what happens on stage and the audience, it was radically different from other epic theatricalities of the time since Celso privileged theatrical (aesthetic) "aggression" as the only possible way to provoke the distressingly lethargic middle-class living under a repressive regime.

It is undeniable that Teatro Oficina's project and the idiosyncrasies of Celso's staging of *O Rei da Vela* and *Roda Viva* marked the theatrical Brazilian scene, regardless of one's critical stance toward their commitment to revolutionary theater. They are essential for this chapter, particularly as examples of the anti-establishment and leftist theatricalities developed in parallel with the one introduced by Grupo Opinião, and the playwright Vianninha in particular.⁶⁰

Grupo Opinião and Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come

As part of the fallout from the 1964 coup, the *Centro Popular de Cultura* (CPC) ceased to exist. Former members of the CPC formed Grupo Opinião, and this collective continued to attract attention by using the techniques and specifications of *teatro de revista* in several plays that relied on laughter and entertainment to criticize the state of things. The tone of most productions was nationalistic and in open dialogue with oppressed groups as a means to question various forms of inequality. The company took its name from their first show—the musical *Opinião*—which they co-produced with Teatro de Arena as a response to the newly established dictatorship. Premiering on 11 December 1964 at Teatro Super Shopping Center in Rio de Janeiro, *Opinião* was directed by Boal and featured Nara Leão, João do Valle, and Zé Ketti. The main idea was to have singers singing their stories, which were based on a variety of sources, including news, songs, testimonials, and quotes from books. Vianninha, Armando Costa, Paulo

⁶⁰ Apart from Teatro Oficina, groups such as TUCA were influential in the development of Brazilian leftist theater between 1964 and 1968. TUCA garnered public success in 1965 with João Cabral de Melo e Neto's play *Morte e Vida Severina*, directed by Silnei Siqueira and with music by Chico Buarque. TUCA also used epic theater as its theoretical base and in its conception of a group in the first stages of becoming politicized: "*o primeiro processo de politização se iniciava entre os estudantes-atores e estudantes-auxiliares, de modo que estes mudassem seu viver e também se tornassem militantes*" [the first process of politicization started among student-actors and student-aides, so that they changed their lives and also became militants] (Silva 6). TUCA believed in the militant component of theater and intended, through this project, to bring the peripheries into the conflict.

Pontes, and Boal wrote the show and followed *revista*'s structure in a theater-in-the-round setting. This performance became an often-cited moment in modern Brazilian theater, not only because of its aesthetic contours but also because it was considered the first artistic act of resistance against the regime.

In the first section, I briefly discussed dramatic works produced in Southeast Brazil (mainly on the Rio de Janeiro–São Paulo axis) or portraying that region's cultural and economic landscape. Now, I turn to Grupo Opinião's production of shows that mobilized political resistance and the use of popular sources (both musical and narratological), such as the play *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* (1966), in which authors including Vianninha and Gullar attempted to engage with the cultural and social contours of the Northeast Brazil through laughter and humor. The authors' engagement with this region involved an attempt to explore the contradictions of life there as they perceived them (from a distance). They conducted their own research and made efforts to embed Northeastern verbal and artistic styles into their work, and they also actively participated in the debate surrounding what Durval Muniz de Albuquerque has termed the "invention of the Brazilian Northeast" in his book of the same title, originally published in 2004.

In the book, Albuquerque shows how economies of power and discursive practices have produced a widespread imaginary around Northeastern Brazil. As he states in his introduction, it is a mistake to view the Northeast as a cohesive "economic, political, or geographical unit" or as a site of cultural production "based on a cultural, geographic, and ethnic pseudo-unity" (23). As a "cut-out" pseudo-unit, the Northeast is in many ways an invention with many creators, including Vianninha and Gullar.

At the heart of the creation, invention, and development of the so-called Northeastern region is the problem of the nation-region binary, which becomes more complex when one considers national culture. Between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, regions and regionalism were understood in terms of a naturalist discourse as the result of the relation between nature, environment, and race that purported to explain the "psychology [...] of different regional types" (Albuquerque 41). When the naturalist paradigm entered into crisis, and a new way of looking at Brazilian spatial configurations emerged (in effect, a proto-critical geography), a new struggle for the discursive and material "ownership" of space also arose¹. At first, the Northeast was understood to be an epistemological space of regionalism and nostalgia (for the mythical times of the mill and of the region's telluric strength); this was the conservative Northeast of Gilberto Freyre, José Lins do Rego, or Cícero Dias that would "respond" to the cultural and social movements of the industrialized, economically developed, and "modern" Center-South (Modernism). The idea that there were two sides, two countries, two imagined communities—Northeast "versus" Center-South, with the former privileging tradition in the face of modernity and industrialization—gained a great deal of traction over the first half of the twentieth century. As Albuquerque points out, however, there were multiple Northeast as well:

Various Northeast (*Nordestes*) were created, beginning in the 1930s, by means of an operation that inverted images and statements consecrated by the conservative and traditionalist reading that had given origin to the region. [These were] *Nordestes* where one no longer dreamed of a return to the past but rather of constructing a future that shared features with the past, such as the negation of modernity and the capitalist system, in the name of building a new society. (35)

The two sides were *o avesso do avesso* [the other side of the other side] of each other, for, as Albuquerque points out, the revolutionary counter-invention, despite having called for the transformation of society, also ended up contributing to the consecration of the Northeast's regionalist identity, or rather to the construction of the diverse and massive expanse as a recognizable and somehow coherent region.

The view of the country held by the elites of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Recife sustained the regionalist discourse. As these privileged claims became points of nearly obligatory reference, they formulated a “national culture” with the objects produced there, perpetuating a hierarchy between modernity and backwardness. With the publication of Freyre's influential *Manifesto regionalista de 1926*, images of drought, misery, marginality, and scourge, from which migration or exile offered the only possible escape, became prevalent⁶¹. Such representations of the backwardness and suffering of a “homogeneous” Northeast were decisive, among others, for constructing São Paulo's regional identity based on progress, modernity, and whiteness (Weinstein 4). It also served to establish Brazil's region-nation binary. This binary, which authors like Weinstein think of as a nation-building project, might lead one to think of *space* as unstable and even abstract (15). It is plausible, in fact, that Brazil's spatial configurations, whether the cities, the jungle, or the backlands, emerged in the first half of the twentieth century as part of a project of inclusion through exclusion. Within this project, contradiction, complementarity, and differentiation all revolved around complex and asymmetrical relations between central and peripheral modernities (Pratt 21).⁶²

The play *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* engages with some of the issues that Grupo Opinião considered to permeate the social and economic relations of the Northeast in the 1960s.⁶³ They developed themes associated with what they considered to be Northeastern literature, but they also attempted to make use of “regional” literary forms, especially the use of verse and specific genres of humor. Various members of the group contributed to the script, after which Vianninha and Gullar drafted the final version.⁶⁴ Under the direction of Gianni Rato, *Bicho* premiered in Rio de Janeiro in 1966. According to members of

⁶¹ The fickleness, fluidity, and inequity of such spatial configurations are directly related to migration and exile (voluntary or forced) and are therefore concatenated with demographic density. Although the distinction between the two types of displacement is porous, it is usually based on the economic character of migration, which is in contrast to political or conflict-related motivations for exile. Concerning migration, especially voluntary migration, the prospect of return is only sometimes present, especially when the place of origin has labor shortages, precarious housing, and geological conditions that are hostile to agricultural activities. Exile, on the other hand, whether forced or not, can have a return on the horizon—contingent upon the changing political conditions of the place of origin, the regimes promoted by the nation-state and its institutions, and possible internal or external military involvement. Both migration and exile are invariably permeated by the capitalist system and the interests of economic, political, and military elites (rural and urban), making return all the more complex the greater the elites' involvement is in the monopoly of big capital and the political-social control of the population.

⁶² Mary Louise Pratt has worked to understand modernity from the perspective of both the so-called metropolitan center (Europe) and the (equally so-called) periphery. According to Pratt, non-European thinkers draw attention to a variety of relations between central and peripheral modernities, among which Pratt highlights contradiction, complementarity, and differentiation.

⁶³ The script ultimately reflects the perspective of people living and producing their work in Rio de Janeiro, and it thus does reflect anything like an emic perspective. This is significant, particularly when comparing *Bicho* with plays such as *Morte e Vida Severina* by João Cabral de Melo e Neto or *O Auto da Compadecida*, written by Ariano Suassuna in 1955.

⁶⁴ Beside Vianninha and Gullar, Grupo Opinião members included Armando Costa, Denoy de Oliveira, Paulo Pontes, Pichin Plá, Thereza Aragão, and João das Neves, as well as former members of the CPC and of the Brazilian Communist party.

Grupo Opinião, the fact that the play was written entirely in verse and based on Northeastern popular literature conferred upon it a literary and theatrical aesthetic that could overcome the limitations of engaged theater such as that promoted by the CPC and neutralize state censorship (Guimarães 57).

The published version of *Bicho* contains several elements that help establish the connections between Opinião's project and the socio-political context in which they drafted the play, namely the title and the preface. The title, *Se correr o bicho pega, se ficar o bicho come*, is a typical Northeastern phrase that refers to an impasse: "If you run, the creature catches you; if you stand still, the creature eats you." It roughly translates to "Damned if you do, damned if you don't," but it also relates more specifically to a situation of not knowing, or of being lost, and to the misery of the impoverished and the ignorance of the wealthy and powerful. While the title serves to frame the play, the preface explains the reasons for this impasse. Signed by Grupo Opinião, it introduces the question, "O teatro, que bicho deve dar?" [The theater, what *bicho* should it give?]. It is divided in three sections, in which Grupo Opinião expresses the political, artistic, and ideological reasons behind the play's production.⁶⁵ According to the group, *Bicho* was born anti-ascetic, "aparentemente amoral" [apparently amoral], and against social quietism. In other words, the political reasoning behind the play is the desire to resist the military power that aimed to repress the people. The group also sees the play as a sign of faith in the Brazilian people, as it relies on popular literary traditions. Artistically, the play is inspired by the British comedy *Tom Jones* (directed by Tony Richardson in 1963) and Brecht's distancing effects (Opinião n/p). It takes Brazilian popular literature as a source to create the desired effect of *encantamento* [enchantment], which the group describes as:

... uma ação mais funda da sensibilidade do espectador que tem diante de si uma criação, uma invenção que entra em choque com os dados sensíveis que ele tem da realidade, mas que, ao mesmo tempo, lhe exprime intensamente essa realidade. O espectador passa alternativamente e dialeticamente da constatação do belo em si da criação à constatação da justeza da síntese proposta. Repõe no homem seu amor à ação, à intervenção, à criação. Abre o apetite para o humano. (*Se Correr o Bicho Pega, se Ficar o Bicho Come*)

[... a more profound action of the spectator's sensibility, who faces a creation, an invention that clashes with the sensible data one has of reality, but which, at the same time, expresses this reality intensely. The spectator passes alternatively and dialectically from the observation of creation's beauty *per se* to the observation of the rightness of the proposed synthesis. It restores in man his love for action, for intervention, for creation. It opens the appetite for the human.]

Such enchantment expands the Brechtian concept of distancing as it creates distance through the sensitive tension between expectations and a critical evaluation of the reality being portrayed. In sum, artistically speaking, Opinião works to create an "obra bela" [beautiful work] in which excess and the baroque serve as a counterpoint to the absence of joy and vitality that the country was experiencing. They did not wish to portray reality, but a fair approximation of it: "Uma maneira doce, tensa, desinteressada e bela de conhecer o real. É o que Brecht repõe na literatura dramática: o encantamento" [A sweet, tense, disinterested and beautiful way of knowing the real. This is what Brecht restores to dramatic literature: enchantment]. The group considered enchantment necessary to make known the unbearable living conditions of the time, and comedy

⁶⁵ In this section, I follow the use of *Bicho* to refer to the play *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* and *bicho* to refer to something analogous to a 'creature,' 'beast,' or 'bug.'

was for them an effective strategy to endure those conditions. The ideological reason to create a comic, “bearable” play was to attempt to portray the impasse between life as it was in Brazil and the general desire to live differently.⁶⁶ As the group claims in the preface:

[...] a capacidade que as pessoas têm de abandonar suas aspirações, de serem como é necessário, é dolorosa e bela. Nós a fizemos engraçada, porque a peça é demasiadamente horizontal e ficaria extremamente cruel, até o insuportável, se não fosse feita em chave de comédia. É a comédia que permite a todos – fazer os personagens serem diferentes entre si. Em chave de drama, com esse roteiro, todos seriam idênticos – o que seria irreal e, portanto, insuportável. (*Se Correr o Bicho Pega, se Ficar o Bicho Come*)

[The ability that people have to abandon their aspirations, to be as they need to be, is both painful and beautiful. We made it funny, because the play is too horizontal and would become extremely cruel, even unbearable, if it were not done in the key of comedy. It is comedy that allows everyone—to make the characters different from each other. In the key of drama, with this script, everyone would be identical—which would be unreal and therefore unbearable.]

The impasse makes the work both a play about perplexity and, at the same time, a call for action.

The apparent lack of solutions to the impasse is embodied by the allegorical figure of the *bicho*, who appears in the first scene (F. Marques 216). It is a short scene that consists of a song that the *bicho* sings with all the other characters:

Se corres, bicho te pega, amô.
Se ficas, êle te come.
Ai, que bicho será esse, amô?
Que tem braço e pé de homem?
Com a mão direita êle rouba, amô,
e com a esquerda êle entrega;
janeiro te dá trabalho, amô,
dezembro te desemprega;
de dia êle grita “avante”, amô,
de noite êle diz: “não vá”!
Será esse bicho um homem, amô,
ou muitos homens será? (Gullar 3)
[If you run, the creature will catch you, dear.
If you stay, it’ll eat you.
Oh, what kind of creature is it, dear?
That has the arm and foot of a man?
It steals with its right hand, dear,
And with its left hand gives it away;
January gives you work, dear,
December unemploys you;
By day it shouts “forward,” dear,
by night it says, “don’t go”!
Is this creature a man, dear,

⁶⁶ The impasse has to do with the fact that life was not sustainable the way it was, nor was it possible to live the way people would like to live. According to the authors, such an impasse led to inertia, which was why they wanted the play to portray and affirm (which I find noteworthy) the various ways in which such inertia was present.

or is it many men?]

The song asks who the *bicho* is and presents the paradoxes surrounding this being that is at once human and non-human and does things that lead to different and paradoxical results (e.g., “It steals with its right hand, dear, /And with its left hand gives it away”). The *bicho* thus emerges as an entity doomed to a paradoxical existence. It is possible to read this as an allegorical portrait of the political constraints imposed by the dictatorial regime (136), which was creating a similarly paradoxical existence for the Brazilian people. Even though the *bicho* (as a character) does not appear at any other point in the play, its appearance in the first scene sets the tone of a farce that occupies a liminal theatrical space “between an assumed failure and a future victory” with its use of *literatura de cordel* under the aesthetic influence of Brechtian epic theater techniques.⁶⁷

One could argue that *cordel*, as a genre that traditionally was a mix of news and entertainment and, in a way, somewhat comparable to *revista*, worked in Northeastern and rural Brazil in a similar way to how *revista* did in urban areas such as Rio de Janeiro. Like *revista*, *cordel* traditionally included a critique of local and international affairs. It used humor and parody as the primary rhetorical strategies and relied on music and orality to inform people about events. Considering the territorial extension of the Northeast, particularly the *sertão*, it is not hard to imagine that *cordel* functioned both as entertainment and as an important (and even sometimes exclusive) source of information about what was happening in the different parts of the region. Also like *revista*, *cordel* inspired and influenced the dramatic production of playwrights such as Ariano Suassuna in the *Auto da Compadecida*. However, *cordel* (in its oral or written form) was not as fragmented as *revista*. It typically conferred a somewhat linear structure to the narrative, albeit often with fantastic elements and unfinished endings. Additionally, the figure of the popular poet was also key in *cordel* as the performer and knowledge keeper who tells a story, sometimes speaking and other times singing.

In *Bicho*, Grupo Opinião created a farce in which they adapted aspects of *cordel* structure and Brechtian epic devices to create a distancing effect, with the aim of raising critical awareness regarding the socio-political forces of Northeastern Brazil and potentially representing the whole country. The atmosphere of the play is not realist but rather light, comic, extravagant, and satirical, and the use of fantastic figures and music contributes to this effect. Written in verse, the dialogues are structured rhythmically in heptasyllabic lines that at times shorten to five syllables. The use of verse allows for the lines to connect through rhythm and rhyme (Paranhos, “Dois e Dois” 124) and distance themselves from expectations of verisimilitude:

The lines in verse attenuate or dispense with the commitment to verisimilitude (in what they are congenial to farce) but illuminate the figures in a way that prose is only exceptionally able to provide. Thus, the fluid and superficial character of the characters, the humor of the situations and, on another level, the emotional coloring of the verses, which humanizes the profiles, can go hand in hand, as they effectively do in *Se correr o bicho pega*. (F. Marques 118)

This stylistic form helps instill a comic atmosphere. As Damasceno argues, “The verbal humor of the play is broad, constituted by the juxtaposition of scatological references, sexual innuendo, and political jabs” (147). The extensive use of song also makes the scenes easier to understand while distancing the audience from the reality being portrayed. Music functions as a complement

⁶⁷ *Cordel* or “string” literature is a literary genre typically written in verse, be it a folktale, a song, or a poem, and distributed in inexpensive *folhetos* (or booklets/chapbooks) at open-air fairs. In Brazil, the genre has its formal and stylistic origins in the Portuguese medieval literary tradition but evolved in the Northeast by incorporating the region’s existing oral tradition.

to the action—at times mimicking it, explaining it, or even intensifying it—adding to the rhythm and, consequently, to the comicality and likelihood of eliciting laughter. It also functions as a sensorial (sonic) scenographic element and illustrates the physical and social environment of the Northeast (F. Marques 72). The songs also help the spectator (and the reader to a lesser degree) follow the dramatic action, which is sometimes fragmented (*à la* Brecht) and dispersed. At the same time, the music breaks the action of the play, making space for reflection about the meaning of the previous scenes (Ishmael-Bisset 62). Although the play is divided into three acts, the episodes are often interrupted, not only by music, visible changes of scenery, and metatheatrical observations and asides, but also by fantastic scenes that highlight the pivotal role that the lack of verisimilitude plays in *Bicho*. In sum, *Bicho* is a play that juxtaposes the ideological, artistic, and political aims mentioned by the authors in their preface with the conviction that comedy and laughter can function as an antidote to the tragic contours of life in the Brazilian Northeast in the 1960s. The authors put it in the following way:

Da peça, haverá os última-moda que vão falar em Brecht, enquanto os retrospectivos lembrarão as farsas medievais e os lidos acrescentarão que o riso é prova de inteligência e proporciona um estado de alegria: aquele que salvou a alma de Augusto Matraga e, mais longe, o rei Davi cantando na frente do povo, “cingindo de alegria”, como diz o salmo. (*Se Correr o Bicho Pega, se Ficar o Bicho Come*)

[Regarding the play, there will be the latest fashions, which will talk about Brecht, while the retrospective ones will remember the medieval farces, and the knowledgeable will add that laughter is proof of intelligence and provides a state of joy: the one that saved Augusto Matraga’s soul and, further on, King David singing in front of the people, “girded with joy,” as the psalm says.]

Laughter is then a “*prova de inteligência*” [a proof of intelligence] and provides an “*estado de alegria*” [state of joy], which seemed to be the playwrights’ goal when they created the play—to offer a space of critique that allowed for joy/entertainment to be the protagonist. As F. Marques points out,

A comicidade estabelece uma espécie de duplo vínculo entre cena e público; vemos uma ação que é ao mesmo tempo outra coisa; temos a verdade da personagem e outra, diversa, endereçada a quem assiste ao jogo. O riso nasce da colisão entre ambas. (139)

[Comedy establishes a kind of double bond between scene and audience; we see an action that is at the same time something else; we have the character’s truth and another different truth addressed to those watching the play. Laughter is born from the collision between the two.]

If the title, the preface, and the song set the play’s tone, its plot revolves around the life of a peasant, Roque, who experiences various incidents that guide the reader/spectator through his environment. As we often find in *cordel*, Roque has an ally (or a “sidekick” as Damasceno puts it)—Brás das Flores—who accompanies (and sometimes deceives) him in the most unusual and often comic situations. Roque always overcomes the challenges he faces, including the ones posed by influential people, by activating ingenious survival strategies and showing “*engenhosidade popular*” [folk ingenuity] (Paranhos, “Dois e Dois” 123), which makes him more of a trickster than a naïve figure. His practices are often antidemocratic, corrupt, excessive and, consequently, satirical (F. Marques 224). Though “negative” overall, some of the scenes in which Roque and Brás das Flores engage with one another reveal a positive connotation to their

respective characters, portraying them as having good intentions but being victims of exploitation. Throughout the play, they undergo different transformations, which F. Marques considers to be a trait of “metamorphic” characters and, consequently, a magical element of the play (138). As the author reminds us, such transformations follow the contours of a comic rhetoric and expose the absurdity of the political and economic exploitation of the poor communities of the region at the time.

The economic exploitation and political abuse of the most impoverished are portrayed in the scenes of the play that combine family ties and political intrigue. At the beginning of the first act, Roque is under the wing of the powerful rural political boss, or coronel, Honorato. Later on, he becomes persona non grata due to his romantic relationship with the coronel’s daughter, Mocinha. Honorato does not accept the relationship, not only because Mocinha and Roque are of different social status but also because she is already (forcibly) engaged to Furtado. The latter is a senator’s son, so their marriage represents the alliance between the “rule of the colonels” (*coronelismo*) and political power.⁶⁸ It is possible to infer this connection since it is election time and Furtado wants to guarantee financial support for his father’s political campaign. The coronel orders Roque’s death as revenge, but the latter ends up murdering the man hired to kill him, who happens to be his own father. In the second act, most of the scenes revolve around the question of who supports whom in the election. There is a type of game between different characters with different interests, in which Roque serves as a scapegoat to the point of being beaten up and imprisoned. In the third act, Roque is in prison and Brás das Flores takes advantage of his situation. Roque’s friend is now better “positioned” in society since he started working in the “big city” as a storyteller or a *cantador de estórias*. When he visits Roque in prison, he tells him about the impact his story and situation have had on public opinion. Most people have either demanded his liberation or positioned themselves politically depending on their candidate’s stance on Roque’s case. Brás das Flores also explains that he is doing well in life because he told his friend’s story in *cordel* under the title *As Aventuras de Roque Penaforte de Murgel*. In this context, Roque has gained enormous popularity, which both candidates try to use to their advantage by showing their support for Roque so the people give them their vote. There is also a metaliterary commentary that exposes the nature and impact of *cordel* literature, which is capable of changing the lives of both the *cantador* and the *cantado*.

The satirical portrayal of the corrupt electoral process and the family ties involved in it is pivotal to understanding the play and its characters. In one scene, Roque is released from prison and stays in a hotel with Brás das Flores. The reader/spectator understands that both candidates are trying to bribe Roque to gain his support and, consequently, that of the people. As for Brás das Flores, he has an interest in Roque’s imprisonment so he can continue to sell his *cordel* stories. Roque is imprisoned again, and there are several instances in which the characters are all strategizing to profit from the various situations and scenarios. At some point, it becomes clear that there is a third candidate who is not reproducing the same behavior and that Roque is willing to support him; at times the other two characters are subject to ridicule, creating the potential for laughter for those reading or watching the play. Toward the end, Roque is free once again but is shot several times. We then see Honorato on his deathbed calling for Roque because he wants to give him his lands. Roque appears, alive, and, in a comical meta-comment says,

Estou aqui, Coronel.
Não, não me mataram, não.

⁶⁸ *Coronelismo* is a type of oligarchy or abuse associated with Brazilian rural areas where coronels possess a centralized political power that they use and abuse in return for different types of favors and loyalty.

É certo, todos os tiros foram em lugar mortal,
 (Ao público.)
 Mas o mocinho morrer no fim pega muito mal. (Gullar 175–6)
 [I’m here, Coronel.
 No, they didn’t kill me, no.
 That’s right, all the shots were in a deadly place,
 (To the audience.)
 But the good guy dying in the end is very bad.]

The coronel says that he wants to leave him the land on the condition that Roque does not marry Mocinha because there is a possibility that they are siblings. Mocinha’s mother, Bizuza, confesses that there is no such danger because Mocinha is the governor’s daughter. The coronel dies, and Roque addresses the spectators to say that they can choose one of three possible endings—a happy one, a legal one, or a Brazilian one. The *final feliz* is the happy one, in which Mocinha gives birth to thirteen kids and Roque becomes the boss (including of Brás das Flores). In the *final juridico*, Roque becomes an advocate of workers’ rights and splits the land among the farmers (smallholdings); Brás das Flores becomes a judge and pursues Roque in his anti-establishment endeavors. In the *final brasileiro*, Mocinha announces that Jesus Glicério is the new governor, and that Roque will actively participate in land reform. This ending culminates with the appearance of Brás das Flores as a medieval warrior announcing that the monarchy has been restored in Brazil, showing that the 1964 coup was a step backwards—i.e., a repressive military government is like regressing to medieval times or the period of the monarchy. As Damasceno puts it, the proposition of these three distinct endings in response to an impasse reveals the metatheatrical component of the play, as the audience is invited to choose one of the possibilities (147).

Notwithstanding the significance of letting the spectators choose one out of the three possible endings, the play’s “pluri” ending reinforces the socio-political impasse evoked by the authors in the preface. As I have mentioned, Opinião argues that the *bicho* is the impasse. However, none of the three possible endings “solves” it. With the happy ending, things continue to be as they have always been, while with the legal ending there is only an attempt to change things (Ishmael-Bisset 62). With the Brazilian ending, nothing seems to change either. In addition, Brás das Flores’s reappearance as a medieval warrior proclaiming the restoration of monarchy—and thus the past—highlights what can be seen as backwardness and socio-political stagnation.⁶⁹ None of these possibilities presents a solution to the issues raised in the play, including political corruption, *coronelismo*, workers’ exploitation, and anti-democratic values. Yet, according to the authors themselves, the play is an attempt to:

[...] ordenar, de desenhar o impasse entre o ser real e a vontade de ser das pessoas na realidade brasileira – cuja característica central é a celeridade das transformações no plano da consciência e a lentidão das transformações no plano institucional – ser como se é, já não quase mais possível; ser, como se tem vontade de ser, ainda não é permitido, não é possível. O impasse, na sua violência, chega à inércia. O “bicho”, usando a cômica, pacata e relaxa linguagem da inércia, tenta fixar os diversos tipos de impasse, suas diferentes tensões,

⁶⁹ Ishmael-Bisset reminds us that, when cordel poets do not finish the sung version of a poem it is because they want their audience to buy the chapbook (62). This is somewhat parallel to *Bicho*, a play with three possible endings that demands further participation of the audience, namely their engagement in social change.

fixando como raiz o impasse econômico. (*Se Correr o Bicho Pega, se Ficar o Bicho Come*)

[...] order, to draw the impasse between people's real being and their will to be in Brazilian reality—whose central characteristic is the speed of transformations at the level of consciousness and the slowness of transformations at the institutional level—to be as one is has become practically impossible; to be as one has the will to be is not yet permitted, is not possible. The dead end, in its violence, reaches inertia. The *bicho*, using the comical, calm, and relaxed language of inertia, attempts to fix in place different types of dead ends, their different tensions, planting economic impasse as their root.]

Bicho is a play of contrasts, games, and collisions that Grupo Opinião intended to transform and transmute into laughable and satirical scenes, the goal of which was to enhance their critique of political corruption tied to family relations in the Northeast and, by extension, to the violent national regime. They do so through *cordel* devices and other techniques of *encantamento* that contribute to a local variation of epic theater. Beyond this, they promise to enrich and expand contemporary readers' understanding of Modern Brazilian theater. In essence, laughter and satire contribute to a piece that lies "between an assumed failure and a future victory," or between the awareness of a broader impasse, and the production of a work that aims to expose it (Sant'Anna 168).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the role of humor and laughter in *O Rei da Vela* and *Roda Viva*, both directed by Celso, and their enactments, which were innovative and created a rupture with previous aesthetics. I have also focused on Vianninha and Gullar's *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, Se Ficar o Bicho Come* to examine the connections between Grupo Opinião's project and their sociopolitical context.

Composed of former CPC members, Grupo Opinião followed what theater practitioners had done before the military coup, but their desire to criticize the regime led them to rely more heavily on popular sources. The playwrights' ideological and aesthetic sensibilities, as well as their need to trick state censorship, fostered a reinterpretation of political theater; beyond this, however, humor and popular literature from other regions took on greater significance. In *Bicho*, they focused on what they called an impasse resulting from the economic exploitation and political abuse of the most impoverished. Structured as *literatura de cordel*, the play uses various devices to create distancing effects to raise critical awareness about the sociopolitical forces of Northeastern Brazil in the 1960s. The comic atmosphere is critical, and verbal humor, song, metatheatrical elements, and scenography all contribute to *encantamento* [enchantment]—or Grupo Opinião's interpretation of Brecht's distancing:

Com encantamento queremos dizer uma ação mais funda da sensibilidade do espectador que tem diante de si uma criação, uma invenção que entra em choque com os dados sensíveis que ele tem da realidade, mas que, ao mesmo tempo, lhe exprime intensamente essa realidade. O espectador passa alternativamente e dialéticamente da constatação do belo em si da criação à constatação da justeza da síntese proposta. Repõe no homem seu amor à ação, à intervenção, à criação. Abre o apetite para o humano. Em Brecht a forma não é mais tirada da natureza; é tirada da beleza, da necessidade de expressão do artista. (*Se Correr o Bicho Pega, se Ficar o Bicho Come*)

[By enchantment we mean a more profound action of the spectator's sensibility, who has before them a creation, an invention that clashes with the sensitive data that they have of reality, but which, at the same time, expresses this reality intensely to them. The spectator passes alternatively and dialectically from the observation of the beauty in itself of the creation to the observation of the rightness of the proposed synthesis. It restores in man his love of action, of intervention, of creation. Opens the appetite for the human. In Brecht, form is no longer taken from nature; it is taken from beauty, from the artist's need for expression.]

The artist's need for expression in *Bicho* thus manifests as a local variation of epic theater, which enriches contemporary conceptions of modern Brazilian theater and analyses of Vianninha's work. Brazilian theater between 1964 and 1968 was marked by scenarios of laughter, even as the sociopolitical context and available aesthetic options evolved into a repressive landscape and its authors ideologically adapted to new political and artistic frameworks.

Finale

The debate about drama as a genre is not new. Still, it is one that often resurfaces when working in the domain of the “theatrical,” the “performative,” and the “dramatic.” There is no single view on the matter, besides perhaps the acceptance that studying drama in academia will invariably lead to questions that complicate existing notions of the genre and the field of literary studies. In any case, I can identify a few aspects that partially justify my choice to study dramatic texts in the context of Brazilian and Portuguese twentieth-century dictatorships. They include the collaborative component of theatrical performances, the interaction in a shared space between subjects and objects on stage and observers/audience members, the aesthetics of the script and the performance, the uniqueness of each rehearsal and enactment, and its live quality, among many others. All of these aspects are fertile ground for an examination of the status quo of repressive sociopolitical circumstances and state censorship, which guides my understanding of a period in history that, fortunately, I did not myself experience. To “reimagine” live theatrical experiences, one can only reconstruct others’ impressions and experiences while also working closely with primary texts and secondary sources.

Guided by an uneasiness about the tragic contours of the dictatorial regimes that limited theater practitioners’ circulation, freedom of speech, and thematic choices in Portugal and Brazil in the mid-twentieth century, I examined the scripts and other archival artifacts related to the plays that constitute the corpus of this dissertation. I noticed that many of these works provoked laughter, or openly aimed to do so, for the purposes of political criticism. As a direct result, I became more and more intrigued by the connection between laughter and repression.

In my initial investigation, I was attentive to the fact that the Portuguese and the Brazilian military regimes were not monoliths; each underwent various phases. A closer look at the state censorship apparatus and cultural production revealed that between 1964 and 1968, theater in Brazil continued to innovate aesthetically despite the regime’s repression apparatus. After 1968, however, the theatrical landscape drastically changed, and some practitioners went into exile while others were persecuted and/or developed new techniques to circumvent state censorship.⁷⁰ In Portugal, the period between the 1930s and the 1950s was very prolific in terms of the production of *teatro de revista*. In comparison, the 1960s witnessed the production of Brechtian epic drama that, for the most part, was prohibited by state censorship and thus, over time, translated into the writing of narrative drama (as the playwrights realized their work was more likely to be read than enacted on stage).

I subsequently analyzed how satire and laughter were used in the theatrical space as distancing techniques and relief strategies that exposed state repression, the corruptibility of the political and social institutions, and the exploitation of the people by capitalist interests. As my research progressed, I identified three main points. First, popular musical theater and *cordel* have not received the scholarly attention they deserve, considering their significance to the development of Brazilian and Portuguese drama during the countries’ respective twentieth-century dictatorships. Second, there was a very clear distinction in Portuguese scholarship between popular theater (namely *revista*) that used laughter to mock current affairs (including

⁷⁰ Boal, Buarque, Celso, and Gullar are a few examples of Brazilian intellectuals who went into exile for political reasons. During his exile in Argentina, Ferreira Gullar produced his best-known work, “Poema Sujo” (1975). While in exile in different countries in Latin America and Europe, Boal wrote the plays *Torquemada* (1971) and *Murro em Ponta de Faca* (1978), among other works, in addition to developing his influential theatrical method, the *Theater of the Oppressed*.

the repressive contours of the regime) and “serious,” dramatic texts inspired by Brechtian epic techniques that openly criticized the dictatorship. For the most part, this distinction did not acknowledge the contribution of *revista* to the critique of the regime. Third, Brazilian popular theater and literature has been incorporated into a corpus of revolutionary plays produced before and after the military coup, further blurring the division between “popular” and “serious” theater, something that only a few critics have pointed out.⁷¹ The more I studied the scripts, the more evident it became that these playwrights were using Brecht’s relation to cabaret as a model. By this I do not mean that they incorporated Brecht’s precepts; rather, they followed his lead in incorporating popular forms such as *revista* and *cordel*. These three points have shaped this dissertation, since they have helped me look comparatively at Portuguese and Brazilian revolutionary theatrical practices considering the specificity of each choice regarding form and content.

More than anything, this dissertation deconstructs the idea that revolutionary theater in Brazil and Portugal followed Brecht’s guidelines. It also inaugurates the idea of “*transepic*” or transnational epic theatricalities, which expands the debate across geographical and temporal contexts and allows for a shift away from the centrality of the critic’s place of enunciation. In adopting a transnational epic theatricalities approach, I acknowledge the risk of Eurocentrism within my analysis, i.e., of overstressing the importance of Germanic and Slavic works and authors (such as Brecht and Viktor Shklovsky), making them privileged expressions of the revolutionary drama “canon.” The transnational epic theatricalities that I have adopted in this dissertation, however, have a different center of gravity; they focus on local, “Southern” theatrical practices and identify continuities with and differences from the German model. I have also read primary texts within a comparative and transatlantic framework. In sum, reading the relation between laughter and repression in Portuguese plays in dialogue with Brazilian ones without the pressure of framing them in one theoretical “model” was key. On the one hand, the problematization of humor and laughter as a tool to create a distancing effect for European and Latin American audiences appeared as the perfect point of comparison. On the other hand, the comparative and *transepic* framework functioned as an untranslatable place where I could attempt to deconstruct the epistemological space from which I had initiated this project.

To advance the project I have initiated in this dissertation, my plan is to approach the scripts of these plays as cultural objects that dialogue with other modes of knowing. To do this implies doing all that the recent global pandemic prevented me from doing: gaining access to play posters, stage shots, theater critics’ reviews, playbills, flyers, and other documents (including the censored versions of some plays) from the periods under study. I will also more closely examine the relation between race, gender, sexuality, and humor in Portuguese and Brazilian popular theater during the repressive regimes. Through focused archival work in both Brazil and Portugal, I will attempt to find the record and *repertoire* (understood as that which “enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (Taylor 20)) that might permit a more comprehensive and fine-grained analysis.

⁷¹ This does not mean that all popular theater and performance had the same significance. On the contrary, both in Portugal and Brazil, several cultural manifestations were (and still are) relegated to a peripheral and marginal space that does not “break” the hegemonies of the cultural production that “inhabits” the center. With this work, my intention is to highlight the contributions of popular theater in the context of theater scholarship in Brazil and Portugal.

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