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Pedagogy in literary 'postcards' João do Rio in São Paulo (1905-1915)

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Pedagogy of Drama

João do Rio's plays set in and about São Paulo

Theater had been part of João do Rio's repertoire since the beginning of his career in the press in 1899. His biographers highlight his involvement with theater both as a critic and a playwright, besides his connections with actors and producers.¹⁹⁵ He started out in the press by writing theater reviews when he was only 17 years old in the *A Tribuna* newspaper. Throughout his career, the author wrote several plays that were briefly staged in Rio de Janeiro. The first of them was *Chic-Chic*, in December 1906, which was lost due to the mishandling in Brazilian archives, as well as the plays *Não É Adão!* and *As Ventoinhas*, both from 1907, all three of which were *revistas musicadas*.¹⁹⁶ His first great success was the play *A Bela Madame Vargas*, in 1912. It was presented in the *Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro*, which was one of the main symbols of the urban reform, inaugurated three years earlier. Considered one of the best plays of the time,¹⁹⁷ it was based on a crime of passion which had occurred six years before, mixing real and fictional characters. The play was also presented in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1914, after being published in book format in the same year. As Graziella Beting points out, another side of João do Rio's involvement with theater was “his advocacy for the professionalization of theater in Brazil, defending actors and authors.”¹⁹⁸ The writer was one of the founders and the first president of the *SBAT - Sociedade Brasileira de Autores Teatrais* (Brazilian Association of Theater Authors), created in 1917 and still active. The association aimed to promote respect for the professions of playwrights and composers.¹⁹⁹

Building on what has been said about his production in Rio de Janeiro, this chapter focuses on João do Rio's production in São Paulo, which has not been a subject of academic analysis. I examine

¹⁹⁵ See: Rodrigues, *João do Rio*, 2010 and Magalhães Junior, *A vida vertiginosa*.

¹⁹⁶ “*Teatro de Revista*, Brazil's version of music-hall theater, had taken shape by the 1880s and continued to flourish better in the 1920s and 1940s. This form of popular theater relied heavily on circus humor, sociopolitical critique, and music numbers, and it was a particularly carioca (Rio de Janeiro-based) phenomenon. It is most closely associated with Arthur de Azevedo (1855), the most prolific and highly regarded popular play-wright of the late nineteenth-century.” Lisa Shaw, “*Teatro de Revista*”, in *Pop Culture Latin America!: Media, Arts, and Lifestyle*, ed. Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 2005), 126.

¹⁹⁷ See for example: Orna Messer Levin, ed., *Teatro de João do Rio* (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2002), XVIII.

¹⁹⁸ Graziella Beting, *Coleção João do Rio: Crônica* (São Paulo: Carambaia, 2015), 12.

¹⁹⁹ Magalhães Junior, *A vida vertiginosa*, 1978, 301.

how his plays published in the *Correio Paulistano* and his theater-related texts adopt an unusual didacticism when compared with other plays from the same period, and question practices and values established as ideal in the Republican regime. Do Rio's theater used irony and satire to stimulate the reconsideration of these standards, and the genre was vital for this task. I return to Celia Marshik's argument about the "implicit lessons" offered by modernist plays and how they invited the reader to rethink ethical and moral codes.²⁰⁰ The discussion about which city – Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo – should be the *cultural capital* of the country is present in several of his texts analyzing the theatrical production in both urban centers, as well as in the mocking of the carioca elite's presumption and mere imitation of European practices and ideas. In that sense, we can say that João do Rio's production in São Paulo predates the cultural revolution ignited by the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in 1922. Defending artistic experimentation and creative freedom, the event established the city of São Paulo as a cultural pole, opposing it to a more conservative Rio de Janeiro. As shown below, in Do Rio's texts the paulista identity was also discussed in terms of the level of instruction of its citizens, and the state's educational institutions, including a Drama Academy. These institutions were defined as an integral part of São Paulo's image. Once again, I refer to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) as the theoretical framework for this chapter. In his texts discussing theater published in the *Correio Paulistano*, Do Rio helps form the paulista identity by opposing São Paulo to a perceived decadent Rio de Janeiro, which, according to João do Rio, is focused on appearances and the imitation of European practices and behaviors.

Discussing theater in Brazil in general, the literary historian Orna Levin analyzes the relevance of French plays staged in Rio de Janeiro and how they contributed to the formation of a theater audience as well as to the expansion of readership in the second half of the nineteenth century. Levin states that since the transfer of the Portuguese Court to Brazil in 1808, theater "had an instructive

²⁰⁰ Marshik, *British Modernism and Censorship*, 7.

and useful quality when it was well administered for the service of the sovereign.”²⁰¹ Levin argues that the participation of European professionals and the inclusion of the city in European theater companies’ international routes helped to create the theatrical life in the federal capital. She highlights that: “The tours of world celebrities who competed amongst themselves and captivated legions of admirers accentuated the connection with Paris and the interconnection of the audiences.”²⁰² In this context, “Comedies with music, vaudevilles and comic operas became an unavoidable part of the Brazilian public's taste.”²⁰³

João do Rio explored comedy in his plays and *cenas teatrais* (theatrical scenes) in São Paulo. *Cenas Teatrais* were texts that appeared on the front page of the *Correio Paulistano* and brought, in italic, a brief description of the set and of the characters (see Figure 3.1). The description was followed by a short script in which the dialogs would be preceded by names of characters. In the period analyzed in this thesis, Do Rio’s texts were the only ones to adopt this format on the *Correio*’s pages. Readers were presented with what could be considered a basic script with the physical and psychological features of the characters. His position in relation to Rio de Janeiro against São Paulo is also made clear in the *cenas teatrais* published in the *Correio Paulistano*, which, I argue, function as postcards which show all the maladies of the carioca society while helping to build the paulista imagined community. They focus on frames of private life, especially of women and their interactions in society or with secret lovers.

²⁰¹ Orna Messer Levin, “Theatrical Culture and Global Audience: French Repertoire in Rio de Janeiro”, in *The Cultural Revolution of the Nineteenth Century: Theatre, the Book Trade and Reading in Transatlantic World*, ed. Márcia Abreu and Ana Cláudia Suriani da Silva (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2016), Kindle.

²⁰² Levin, “Theatrical Culture and Global Audience,” position 4190.

²⁰³ Levin, “Theatrical Culture and Global Audience,” position 4085.

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A reunião do Conselho de Administração do Banco do Brasil, em 1987, deu origem a uma série de mudanças na estrutura, na gestão e no funcionamento do Banco. A primeira delas foi a criação do Conselho de Administração, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de decisão do Banco. A segunda foi a criação do Conselho de Fiscalização, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de fiscalização do Banco. A terceira foi a criação do Conselho de Gestão, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de gestão do Banco. A quarta foi a criação do Conselho de Auditoria, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de auditoria do Banco. A quinta foi a criação do Conselho de Planejamento, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de planejamento do Banco. A sexta foi a criação do Conselho de Controle, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de controle do Banco. A sétima foi a criação do Conselho de Avaliação, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de avaliação do Banco. A oitava foi a criação do Conselho de Desenvolvimento, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de desenvolvimento do Banco. A nona foi a criação do Conselho de Inovação, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de inovação do Banco. A décima foi a criação do Conselho de Sustentabilidade, que passou a ser o órgão máximo de sustentabilidade do Banco.

Diretor-geral: José Carlos de Faria
Vice-diretor: Felipe Augusto de Almeida
Assessoria técnica: João Roberto de Castro Caldas

[illegible]

reunindo a comissão, em 1.º de jan. de 1933, o ministro de 1930, que não pôde ser considerado um cartista, afirmou que os problemas de distribuição.

Em terreno alagado, o projeto sustentando-se a cunhado, no corrente uma segunda época de constituição de preparatório.

O projeto abrange a área de Justiça e Negócios do crédito de 2820000, sob a verba 3.ª do art. 2.º de 1.310, de 31 de dezembro, para pagamento.

O projeto, desde 1.º de 31 de dezembro de 1930, a Secretaria da Casa dos Deputados, Leopoldo

quando discutido, desde a competência dos juizes ou processos de arbitramento e partilha de estrangeiros, quando a favor prevista em convênio; e da competência da justiça dos Estados, nos testes.

Ficaram por isso germinando substitutos da Comunidade e Justiça e o nome do sr. Julio Santos.

Figure 3.1 - *O amor é como o chá...* first João do Rio's cena teatral published in the *Correio Paulistano* in 31 August 1905 (first and second columns at the top left)

As Cortes & Barrea-Marlys state, in the second half of the nineteenth-century Brazilian Romanticism gave way to Realism “which brings to the stage aspects of daily life and breaks away from the previous exoticism, which had produced a certain weariness in the public.”²⁰⁴ The most prominent name in Brazilian theater in the 1900s was the journalist and playwright Arthur Azevedo (1855-1908), who obtained great success in the city with parodies and imitations of operettas or *revistas*. Azevedo started his career in 1876, still during the Second Empire (1840-1889), and his works would include Brazilian music and the mockery of prominent figures, in a kind of caricature performed on stage. In the period João do Rio was writing for the *Correio Paulistano*, the *Teatro de Revista* or simply *Revista*, inspired by the French *Revues*, was the theatrical genre most explored by Azevedo. Do Rio himself started his playwriting journey with *revistas*. During the spectacles, important facts of the previous year would be derided in front of an audience and the spectacles would be commented upon extensively in the press.²⁰⁵ Flora Süssekind argues that the *revistas* help to build the image of the city of Rio de Janeiro by representing a supposed modern Brazil on stage.²⁰⁶ Here I contend that João do Rio does the same in São Paulo, contributing to the formation of the State’s identity.

In the *Correio*, João do Rio commented on Azevedo's productions and he interviewed Azevedo twice in 1905. He considered the playwright to be the main name of the theater in Brazil at the time and, even after his death, in 1908, Azevedo would be mentioned as a reference for the new generation of writers. Nonetheless, João do Rio also advocated for a new kind of theater, stating that the audiences needed to be instructed. At the time, the borders between stage and literature were thin. Most of the playwrights also wrote fiction, crônicas and criticism for the press. João do Rio utilizes the newspapers for experimenting with theatrical texts using the pages of the *Correio Paulistano* as a

²⁰⁴ Eladio Cortes, and Mirta Barrea-Marlys, eds., *Encyclopedia of Latin American Theater* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2003), 57.

²⁰⁵ For more information on Arthur de Azevedo's life and work, see: Fernando Antonio Mencarelli, *Cena Aberta: a absolvição de um bilontra e o teatro de revista de Arthur de Azevedo* (Campinas, SP: Editora da Unicamp, 1999). See also: Flora Süssekind, *As revistas de ano e a invenção do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1986).

²⁰⁶ Süssekind, *As revistas de ano*.

stage and also as a rostrum to discuss the genre and national productions. In them, we can see the uniqueness of his position as a representative of the federal capital and an advocate for São Paulo.

Most scholars of João do Rio have repeatedly commented on his connection to theater. In the 2000s, two annotated collections of João do Rio texts were published in Brazil: Níobe de Abreu Peixoto's *João do Rio e o Palco* (2009) and Orna Levin's *O Teatro de João do Rio* (2002). Focusing on João do Rio's theatrical criticism, Peixoto states that João do Rio emphasized the details of each production and defended the singularity of the plays, good construction of dialogues and the need to respect the work of writers.²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, he clearly voiced his disappointment with Brazil's repertoire and severely criticized Brazilian artists whom he considered unprepared for the task they intended to execute.

In her book on João do Rio's plays, Orna Levin states that João do Rio had been involved with the theater since the beginning of his career, writing about presentations, visiting the backstage of theaters in Rio de Janeiro, interviewing actors and playwrights and, from 1906 on, writing plays that would be staged in that city. Levin argues that his *crônica* was also guided by a theatrical conception of society: "Objects, bodies, clothing, gestures or ideas, everything can contribute to the notion of a set, from which the writer extracts a picture, a scene or a situation."²⁰⁸ João do Rio transposes to the stage the themes explored in his *crônicas* and attempts to unmask the so-called elegant society, revealing its futility and artificiality. If in the previous chapter he commented on carnivalesque masks, here he talks about everyday masks worn by society. Levin remarks that this was a period of transition, when having a theater that matched European trends was considered a necessity and in which the consolidation of professional life for artists as well as the creation of a Brazilian repertoire were being discussed.²⁰⁹ Artists and authors competed with foreign productions presented in Rio de Janeiro and with the proliferation of cinematographers, which were more popular and accessible than

²⁰⁷ Peixoto, ed., *João do Rio e o Palco: Página Teatral*, 1:26.

²⁰⁸ Levin, *Teatro de João do Rio*, XV.

²⁰⁹ Levin, *Teatro de João do Rio*, XIII.

the plays because of their price and availability across the city. According to Orna Levin, Do Rio was “a true portraitist of the masks and emotions of the capital's cosmopolitan elite during the [Brazilian] Belle Époque”²¹⁰ and his plays, read together, draw a panoramic view of Brazil's cultural center at the time: Rio de Janeiro.

I agree with Levin about João do Rio's critical view about the futility of the elites' behavior. As seen in his contributions for the *Correio Paulistano*, his criticism was frequent. However, in this chapter, I would like to highlight the pedagogical aspects of this criticism that aimed to educate readers about the artificiality of audiences and artists, an aspect of Do Rio's work that has not yet received critical appraisal. His work for the paulista newspaper shows that the writer was also inserted in a debate about the primacy of São Paulo over Rio de Janeiro, and vice-versa, in cultural terms. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, after the coffee production boom and bust in the 1880s, followed by increasing industrialization and an enormous population influx, the state was also engaging in a debate about the paulista identity, creating a narrative of exceptionalism and immemorial success.

João do Rio's pieces for the *Correio Paulistano* were written in this crucial moment for the formation of paulista identity and regional branding as well as for the discussion of São Paulo's role in terms of national identity. The otherness and even “exoticism” (to use João do Rio's words)²¹¹ of Rio de Janeiro, so present in *A Escola dos Vícios* as we saw in the previous chapter, were vital to establishing the difference between both urban centers. The open defense of the primacy of São Paulo over Rio de Janeiro meant a courageous step in João do Rio's career, especially due to the clear association between him and the federal capital. Several of his texts published in São Paulo would be republished in book collections or newspapers from Rio de Janeiro, demonstrating that his position was not kept within São Paulo's borders and that he was not afraid of the repercussions.

²¹⁰ Levin, *Teatro de João do Rio*, XXXIV.

²¹¹ About João do Rio's use of the term “exotic,” see the previous chapter of this thesis.

I argue that João do Rio was not only an interlocutor, but also an asset in the dispute between the *federal capital* and the *artistic capital*. This discussion was vital at the time because it had implications for how São Paulo was portrayed in the national scene and also overseas. As shown in the previous chapter, Do Rio's public persona, intimately connected to the city of Rio de Janeiro, gave him the authority to comment on this competition. Rio de Janeiro's *cronista par excellence*, the writer fostered his persona as a civilized and educated man who was in the position to analyze Brazil's two main urban centers and clearly demonstrated a preference for São Paulo. What is more, his authority guaranteed him a place from which he could teach his readers (and later audience) about his understanding of authentic modern values.

São Paulo had been known since the nineteenth century as an academic city and the role of education, which was one of the priorities in the Republican ideals in São Paulo, became a part of the identity forged during this period. According to the historian Malta Campos, the modernizing project for the city implied "another kind of sanitization,"²¹² different from Rio's efforts to reform the physical aspects of the city, represented by the education of its inhabitants. João do Rio not only talked about the instruction of citizens but also of artists and how São Paulo had an advantage over Rio de Janeiro due to its level of education and concern for the future generations.

João do Rio's work in the *Correio Paulistano* offers us the opportunity to see several facets of his connections to dramatic art, as a writer publishing *cenas teatrais*, as a critic commenting on the repertoire and audiences at the time, his testimony about becoming a playwright and what he had to say about his production in São Paulo while being interviewed in the *Correio*. All this material allows us to acquire a better view on how his oeuvre contributes to the formation of a paulista identity and how it relates to the discussions about what country Brazil should be and the disputes about which city should be the model for the rest of the country. In this chapter, I also analyze the significance of the fact that his play *Eva* (1915) was made for São Paulo and presented there first, a fact that is

²¹² Malta Campos, *Os Rumos da Cidade*, 61.

somewhat ignored in the analyses of his oeuvre which do not take into consideration his presence and influence in São Paulo.

In what follows, I first analyze João do Rio's texts as a theater critic and his preoccupation with the education of the audiences and artists. Then, the focus shifts to his *censo teatral* in which female characters appear as representatives of Rio de Janeiro. Later I compare them to the play *Eva* and the crônica "A Mulher Paulista," [The Paulista Woman] both from 1915, to argue that Do Rio uses these women to postulate two kinds of modernity and models for Brazil as a nation, assisting the formation of the paulista imaginary community.

The need for educating audiences and artists

The first group of texts from the *Correio Paulistano* I will analyze are the ones in which João do Rio expresses his criticism of the uneducated audiences and artists that dominated the national scene, especially in Rio de Janeiro. They are important since they reveal the writer's thoughts about dramatic art in Brazil and the direction it should take. Since the beginning of his collaboration with the *Correio Paulistano*, João do Rio commented on the plays presented in Rio, the characteristics of the productions and the reception of these spectacles in the press. However, a recurring theme was the critique of the city's presumptuously elegant audience which, in his opinion, dressed in the right way, but lacked education to really understand and appreciate the plays. According to the writer, the cronistas, and ultimately the press, were partially responsible for that situation: "The cronistas have emphasized it so much that Rio de Janeiro convinced itself after all that it has a season, a kind of theatrical season of tournées, like London's."²¹³ The irony is directed not only at the members of society but also at the press and literati for perpetuating this illusion about Rio de Janeiro.

²¹³ In the original: "O Rio, tanto têm assegurado os cronistas, que afinal se convenceu de possuir uma *season*, uma espécie de estação teatral de *tournées* como a de Londres." João do Rio, "A Duse e a Plateia," *Correio Paulistano*, Jun. 26, 1907, 1. Italics in the original.

On the occasion of the Italian actress Eleonora Duse's (1858-1924) presentation in the *Teatro Lírico* in Rio, 1907, the writer stated that during the intermission it was possible to see the spectators unmasked: "What do you hear in that group? The elegant [people], flapping their gloves, criticize the boots of the actor who gave the replica or the nose of the actress in charge of the role of the maid. What do those gentlemen laugh at? At the legs of the lead actress whose thinness does not satisfy their visual lust at all."²¹⁴ The shallowness of their critiques and observations was proof of their lack of culture and their presumption prevented them from becoming educated to really appreciate art. It seems unacceptable to João do Rio that people with access to this kind of spectacle would choose to pretend to understand it instead of finding means to learn about it and acquiring basic skills to comprehend it. The writer does not comment on the poor classes, who were deprived of financial means to even participate in this kind of a spectacle. His issue was with the high classes — the elected model of behavior for the Republican regime symbolizing civilization and elegance — who were nonetheless unprepared to understand the modern world, creating a farce that was perpetuated by the press.

In the following year, 1908, João do Rio published an even more pungent commentary about the audiences in the federal capital. In the text, titled "A Plateia Carioca" (The Rio de Janeiro Audience), he criticized the falsehood and artificiality of Rio de Janeiro's elegant society and the role newspapers played in this matter. I quote the text at length because it reveals several aspects of Do Rio's criticism, which comes with some false modesty, which, actually, only emphasized his position and gave him an even more sophisticated aura

At first, I, still not very civilized, had an appetite to discuss, to ask impertinent questions about the made-up rules of such people. Then I realized that it wasn't worth it. This audience, deep down, is very curious. In general, we understand art by indigestion. [...] It is perfectly accepted that, in a cosmopolitan city, everyone knows Italian, French, English and even Turkish. But I am betting that most of those *gentlemen* set do not even know Portuguese very well and those *leading beauties* do not understand all languages wonderfully — so much so that with prudence and at the request of subscribers, newspapers publish extensive summaries of each new piece, before their openings [...]

²¹⁴ In the original: "Que se ouve naquele grupo? Os elegantes, batendo as luvas, criticam as botas do ator que deu a réplica ou o nariz da atriz encarregada do papel de criada. De que riem aqueles senhores? Das pernas da primeira atriz cuja magreza não satisfaz de tudo a sua concupiscência visual." João do Rio, "A Duse e a Plateia," I.

From all this, it results that except from the outside nothing else is adapted, that civilization is a slight varnish over the primitive bourgeois, and that everything is just an enormous *molièresque* parody. [...] ²¹⁵

The “varnish” mentioned by Do Rio manifested itself in physical signs of civilization, such as “avenues, automobiles and elegant advertisement,” yet, in his opinion, these were superficial things, camouflaging the real issue. They were, at most, a Molière parody. For the author, real civilization was “the understanding of the Beautiful and the Good,”²¹⁶ which could not be found in this city. The coat over their true nature — elegant society and reforms — was nothing without knowledge and education. In his opinion, this was not the case for the city of São Paulo. “Indigestion” seems to refer to the “swallowing” of foreign influences and tendencies, without any reflection, an idea similar to Oswald de Andrade’s later use of the cannibal metaphor.²¹⁷ In the last sentences of this piece, the writer rescues a phrase attributed to the renowned actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) while on tour in Brazil, when she declared that São Paulo was the “artistic capital of Brazil.” Analyzing the impact of Bernhardt’s travels to the paulista capital, Aiala Levy affirms that her statement would reverberated for the next three decades in the discourses of the elite and artists from São Paulo to celebrate or to object to this label. Levy argues that the anecdote from Bernhardt’s trip’s offers an opportunity to “understand how a city of second importance forged its identity: in the press and the auditoriums, in rivalry with the national capital, and based on the perceived distinction between the fine arts and the popular arts.”²¹⁸ João do Rio endorses the actress’ statement, engaging in the

²¹⁵ In the original: “A princípio, eu, ainda pouco civilizado, tinha apetites de discutir, de pontuar de adversativas impertinentes os decretos de tal gente. Depois verifiquei que não valia a pena. Essa plateia, no fundo, é curiosíssima. Em geral, nós percebemos d’arte por indigestões. Levamos o ano inteiro a fingir elegâncias com uma falta de dinheiro angustiosa, ou a refocilar nas *reprises* do *Tim-tim* por *tim-tim*, do imortal Sousa Bastos, e, de repente, em quatro meses, temos três companhias portuguesas, cinco italianas, dez de variedades, seis exóticas, duas francesas. Vai-se ao teatro, depois de uma longa ausência, seguido, noites a fio. É perfeitamente admitido que, numa cidade cosmopolita, toda gente saiba o italiano, o francês, o inglês e até o turco. Mas eu estou a apostar que a maioria daqueles *gentlemen set* não sabe nem mesmo bem português e que as *leading beauties* não compreendem maravilhosamente todas línguas — tanto assim que com prudência e a pedido dos assinantes, os jornais publicam extensos resumos a cada pela nova, antes da representação. [...] De tudo isso resulta que não se adapta senão o exterior, que a civilização é um leve verniz por cima do primitivo burguês, e que tudo não passa de uma enorme paródia molièresca. [...]” João do Rio, “A Plateia Carioca,” *Correio Paulistano*, Jul. 16, 1908, I. Italics in the original.

²¹⁶ João do Rio, “A Plateia Carioca,” *Correio Paulistano*, Jul. 16, 1908, I.

²¹⁷ About the use of the word “digestion,” see the introductory chapter of this thesis. About Oswald de Andrade’s manifesto, see: Tosta, “Modern and Postcolonial?”

²¹⁸ Aiala Levy, “Sarah Bernhardt in São Paulo: A Muse for the ‘Artistic Capital,’” *Istor* 14, no. 53 (Summer 2013).

narrative of success, and criticizes the role of the press in fabricating the 'right' opinions and choosing the talents that should figure among the best.

Lack of knowledge on the part of the audiences also plagued the stage itself. In January of 1910, in the *Correio Paulistano*'s pages, João do Rio commented on Brazilian theater, which was the subject of lively discussions due to the inauguration of the *Theatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro* in 1909, one of the main symbols of a modernized Rio de Janeiro. According to him, at this time, the country had two “incandescent issues”²¹⁹: *hermismo* and the *Teatro Nacional* (National Theater). The first issue referred to the presidential run disputed between Marshal Hermes da Fonseca (1865-1923), who represented the return of the military to power, and the Senator Rui Barbosa (1849-1923), who defended a civilian government.²²⁰ The *Campanha Civilista* (Civilian Campaign), led by Barbosa, counted on the support of the States of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais and was openly defended by João do Rio both in the *Correio Paulistano* and in the *Gazeta de Notícias*, newspapers aligned with Rui Barbosa's ideas.

Lashing out some criticism against Hermes between the lines, still during the *Campanha*, João do Rio focused on the discussions about theater in Brazil. National artists were unhappy with the success of foreign theater companies in Brazil and urged people to boycott those productions. The writer states that instead of complaining about this, Brazilian artists should educate themselves: “They did not learn anything, they did not make any effort, they barely know how to read, and that's it.”²²¹ Do Rio emphasizes the role of playwrights in ensuring the quality of productions in France: “Having illusions about Brazilian theater is a heroic fantasy. Theater is the result of an exquisite civilization, it

²¹⁹ In the original: “uma questão incandescente, além do hermismo, é ainda o Teatro Nacional.” João do Rio, “O Theatro Nacional,” *Correio Paulistano*, Jan. 14, 1910, 1.

²²⁰ Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca (1827-1892), Hermes da Fonseca's uncle, served as the first president of Brazil between 1889 and 1891, when he signed a resignation letter turning over the position to another military president: Marshal Floriano Peixoto (1839-1895). The authoritarian and violent government of Peixoto, between 1891 and 1894, would give him the nickname *Marechal de Ferro* (Iron Marshal). His successor, the paulista Prudente de Moraes (1841-1902) was Brazil's first civilian president (between 1894-1898), followed by two other paulistas: Campos Sales (1841-1913) and Rodrigues Alves (1848-1919). In 1906, Afonso Pena (1847-1909), from the state of Minas Gerais, assumed the post until his death in 1909, when the vice-president Nilo Peçanha (1867-1924) took office from June 1909 to November 1910.

²²¹ In the original: “Não aprenderam nada, não fizeram um esforço, sabem ler mal, e pronto.” João do Rio, “O Theatro Nacional,” 1.

is the last form of the genius of a race. It was not comedy that made French theater from Corneille to Bataille. It is the great writers who did and do it. The last phase of people is artistic because it is a set of perfections. We in America claim to be the most artistic. The fact is that we are just a vast French translation.”²²² João do Rio criticizes the pure imitation of European patterns and defends that theater in Brazil should be original and led by local writers. It anticipates discussions that would be in fashion during the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (1922), when the submission of Brazilian arts to foreign tendencies was criticized and the (re)appropriation and repurposing of these elements was defended, but the simple imitation of these was condemned.

Do Rio ends the text saying that these discussions were laughable, “because there is certainly no greater fantasy than making Marshal Hermes president of the Republic and regenerating dramatic art...”²²³ The author's assumption regarding the presidential run turned out to be wrong. Despite Barbosa being considered the favorite to win, Fonseca was victorious in November of that same year.²²⁴ Nonetheless, I would like to center my analysis on João do Rio's second point. In his opinion there was no Brazilian theater to be regenerated, therefore the idea in itself was ridiculous. In the rest of the text, the writer affirms that Brazil with a “conservatory, education, travels, intelligent businessmen, then the producers could do something. Just not with the actors we have now.”²²⁵ The idea that Brazil was a society still being formed was extended to the arts. The presumption and shallowness of the society manifested themselves in theatrical productions and should be fought with instruction.

²²² In the original: “Ter ilusões sobre teatro brasileiro é uma fantasia heróica. Teatro é o resultado de uma civilização requintada, é a última forma do gênio de uma raça. Não foi a comédia que fez o teatro francês de Corneille a Bataille. São os grandes escritores que a fizeram e a fazem. A última fase de um povo é a artística, porque é o conjunto das perfeições. Nós na América temos a pretensão de sermos os mais artistas. O fato é que não passamos de uma vasta tradução francesa.” João do Rio, “O Theatro Nacional,” I. João do Rio refers to the French dramatists Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) and Henry Bataille (1872-1922).

²²³ In the original: “porque não há decerto fantasias maiores do que fazer o marechal Hermes presidente da República e regenerar a arte dramática...” João do Rio, “O Theatro Nacional,” I.

²²⁴ “Rui Barbosa had been the favourite to win the election, which for the first time had excited widespread popular interest. Marshall Hermes da Fonseca's victory – despite the fact that he had been supported by Pinheiro Machado from the republican Conservative Party – represented the return of the military to power. Rui Barbosa, in contrast, was in favour of republican institutions and a civilian government.” Lilia M. Schwarcz Starling, and Starling, Heloisa Maria Murgel Starling, *Brazil: a Biography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 626.

²²⁵ In the original: “Um conservatório, a educação, as viagens, os empresários inteligentes, os ensaiadores poderiam fazer alguma coisa. Apenas não com os atuais.” João do Rio, “O Theatro Nacional,” I.

Education of artists was also among the ambitions of the São Paulo government. The state inaugurated the *Conservatório Dramático e Musical de São Paulo* only in 1906, even though its creation had been discussed since 1903.²²⁶ The Brazilian dramatist and journalist Gomes Cardim (1865-1932) was the main name in the process, and would also participate in the creation of the *Theatro Municipal de São Paulo*, opened in 1911, which hosted the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in 1922. According to the ads published in the paulista press, the three-year-long ‘Drama course’ comprised several disciplines in a quite broad curriculum that reflects what was considered important at the time. General knowledge about art mixing with psychology and language skills as João do Rio had pointed out.²²⁷

The *Conservatório de São Paulo* was inaugurated in the period João do Rio was absent from the newspapers due to health issues, therefore, there are no writings about this specific event. Nonetheless, the author visited the institution in 1915 and presented a conferência there, as we will see in detail in the following chapter. The institution was a subject highlighted in the *Correio Paulistano* at the time. In the section “Chronica,” a writer under the pseudonym *Fernão Vieira* affirmed that the *Conservatório* marked “the history of our intellectual progress” and would contribute to the “regeneration of Brazilian dramatic art.”²²⁸ In the same text, he affirms that the institution would be a “rehabilitation school in the national scene.”²²⁹ Vieira also mentions Bernhardt's statement about the artistic capital of the country without quoting it, as João do Rio himself had done. The cronista also compliments Gomes Cardim for his “heroic fight” in favor of the “achievement of our good taste” that this institution represented and that would offer “some artists who honor the Brazilian stage and attest to the beneficial influence of the theater justifying what Voltaire already said: – Le

²²⁶ See: Elizabeth Ribeiro Azevedo, “Conservatório Dramático e Musical de São Paulo: pioneiro e centenário.” *Revista Histórica*, no. 16, (2006): 1-5. <http://www.historica.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/materias/anteriores/edicao16/materia01/texto01.pdf> Accessed on: Feb, 18, 2023.

²²⁷ The disciplines in the curriculum were: languages (Portuguese, French, Italian and English), history, geography, general literature, poetics, psychology, aesthetics, choreography of Brazil, arithmetic, history of theater, diction, recitation, expression, physiognomy and gesture, characterization and clothing, representation collective, fencing and gymnastics. “Conservatório,” in *Secção Livre, Correio Paulistano*, Apr. 3, 1906, 4.

²²⁸ Fernão Vieira, “Chronica,” *Correio Paulistano*, Mar. 18, 1906, 1.

²²⁹ Fernão Vieira, “Chronica,” 1.

théâtre instruit mieux que ne fait un gros livre.”²³⁰ In the *Correio*, there is the idea of the educational nature of theater. The concern with education is present on two levels: first the necessity of educating artists to rehabilitate national theater and, second, the pedagogical function of the plays that would come, which were considered more effective than books in Vieira's text.

The writer behind the pseudonym has not been identified by literary critics.²³¹ Regardless, the pseudonym being featured in the prestigious first page of the Sunday's edition of the *Correio* is extremely revealing, since the name was a reference to the famous *bandeirante* Fernão Vieira Tavares (1576-1622). There is an undeniable connection to the colonial past in an attempt to create the narrative of success for São Paulo. Barbara Weinstein affirms that it was in the 1910s that the *bandeirantes*, “‘half-breed’ slave-catchers, portrayed in the standard Jesuit accounts of the colonial era as barbaric, brutal, and unsavory ruffians, morph into the revered progenitors of modern paulista identity.”²³² As we will see in the next chapter of this thesis, João do Rio himself adopted this idea in a speech to students published in São Paulo and later collected in a book.

The *Correio Paulistano*, the official newspaper of the *Partido Republicano Paulista (PRP)*, engages in that narrative of success that connects the state to colonial “heroes.” It is also interesting that the *cronista* emphasizes that the *Conservatório* would be an institution that contributed to national aggrandizement. This is in accordance with Weinstein's reflections on region and nation, and her point “not to insist that regional identity was more (or less) important than national identity, but rather that neither region nor nation could be imagined separately from the other.”²³³ The dispute about dominance between the two urban centers was also a dispute about which one would be the

²³⁰ Fernão Vieira, “Chronica,” 1.

²³¹ Scholars have suggested the possibility that Fernão Vieira was a pseudonym of the writer Paulo Prado (1869-1943), who was the eldest son of Antônio Prado, the Mayor of São Paulo at the time, even though they have not yet confirmed it. See: Marcel Villemor Jofily de Lima, “Paulo amigo: Novas perspectivas e documentos para o estudo da obra de Paulo Prado” (MA thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2018), 27-8; Carolina Brandão Piva, “Paulo Prado: Cafeicultura, modernismo e política” (MA thesis, Universidade Federal de Goiás, 2009). According to Saulo Gouveia, Paulo Prado is known as the “*grand mécène* of Brazilian Modernism.” Saulo Gouveia, *The Triumph of Brazilian Modernism: the Metanarrative of Emancipation and Counter-narratives* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 121.

²³² Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity*, 37.

²³³ Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity*, 21.

model for the rest of the country. It is well-known that this discussion is also about how educated their populations really were. One prominent aspect of João do Rio's position in this debate is the didactic character of his own *cenas teatrais*. In them, Rio de Janeiro society is mocked through the tales of his female characters and dandies. The texts engage in reverse pedagogy — less direct than the criticism mentioned in this section — and teach about how not to behave while discussing the morality of society.

The frivolity of Carioca Women

Besides João do Rio's texts about specific plays and artists, and his pieces lecturing about aspects of theater in Brazil and the direction it should follow, the writer also used the pages of the *Correio Paulistano* to create experiments that he called *cenas teatrais*: a type of mini-plays for the newspaper's readers. These mini-plays offered an opportunity to the readers to see the writer putting into practice many of the points he discussed in his critical pieces. However, the layout (as introduced above) was not the only characteristic that made these texts unique. The *Correio's* readers would encounter a text that was distinct from all others and that set a plot and scenery for the short interaction of his characters, which were usually elegant people. They provided glimpses into the bourgeoisie's private life, albeit through fictional characters. In this section, I argue that the situations explored in the *cenas teatrais* worked as postcards of a life that, despite happening within Brazilian borders, was still quite distant from the average citizen. Within the newspaper, the *cenas* worked as entertainment, breaking the seriousness of the news, political editorials and official reports. Especially for non-theatergoers, they offered an opportunity to at least imagine a play being staged. In doing so, they were invited to reflect on two distinct kinds of modernity, as well as on the carioca imagined community and how it differs (or could differ) from the paulista one.

When compared to other works of João do Rio that I discuss in the next subsection — namely the play *Eva: a propósito de uma menina original* [Eva: about an original girl] (1915) and the crônica

titled “A Mulher Paulista” (1915) – the *cenas teatrais* reveal a very distinct portrayal of carioca and paulista women. Bearing in mind the dispute over the title of the *cultural capital* at the time, it is significant that João do Rio uses female characters as representative of distinct mentalities and lifestyles. In my interpretation of these texts, the *souls* of the two cities – to use João do Rio’s iconic term – are fully manifested in the (inter)actions of the fictional females. Rio de Janeiro’s women are represented as frivolous, ignorant, and futile. They have petty and superficial concerns and are surrounded by hypocrisy. On the other hand, his paulista female characters are connected to pureness, integrity, intelligence and are associated with the formation of the nation.

At the time João do Rio collaborated with the *Correio*, plays with female protagonists “become flagships for theater companies, be they Brazilian or foreign”²³⁴ and the writer embraced this tendency, of which he was certainly aware. Throughout his career, Do Rio was in close contact with the theater world, especially with actresses and dancers, the most famous of them being Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), who, when touring Brazil in 1915, became his friend, as mentioned in her autobiography.²³⁵ Furthermore, he started his career as a theater critic. Therefore, the writer was familiar with the representation of female characters, as well as with the backstage in which actresses were gaining more relevance. The *cenas teatrais* make it possible to discuss both theater as a literary genre and gender roles at the time, typifying and solidifying images about a different land, breaking geographical barriers through the female characters.

Relevant to my comparison of his texts to postcards is the fact that at the time portraits of actresses on this medium became popular. Analyzing the circulation of these postcards in the early-twentieth-century Australia, the theater historian Veronica Kelly states that

postcard sending and collecting ensured that the informal circulation of the theatrical card freed the cultural image of the performer from the constraints of locality, gender, class, and

²³⁴ Levin, “Theatrical Culture and Global Audience,” position 4115.

²³⁵ “Here I met the poet Jean de Rio, who was beloved by all the young men of Rio, for every youth in Rio is a poet himself. When we walked together we were followed by all these young men crying, ‘Viva Jean de Rio! Viva Isadora!’” Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York and London: Liveright, 2013), 292, Kindle. See also: Rodrigues, *João do Rio*, 208-211.

social capital which limit live theatre attendance, to disperse images of glamour and celebrity into many new reception contexts and across the widest possible territory.²³⁶

Likewise, Do Rio's *cenias* functioned as postcards bringing theater close to the readers, who could experience it in the comfort of their homes. The cultural image of Rio de Janeiro's women – as representatives of the city – crossed borders throughout João do Rio's texts. Presenting a domestic and intimate scene, even though fictional, he consequently incorporates a postcard logic by centering the plots around female characters. A possibility was offered to the readers' imagination to peek into another fictional but also imaginary community while reflecting on their own. These women "made" of newspaper enable the creation of literary and theatrical postcards in the pages of the *Correio Paulistano*. At the same time, Do Rio experimented with playwriting in the pages of the *Correio*, and elements explored in the *cenias teatrais* would appear in the later plays, such as *Eva*, which I will analyze in the following section.

In his portrayals of carioca women one of the main similarities is the focus on his *madames* and *mademoiselles*. They are all members of Rio de Janeiro's elegant society, or, at least, pretend to be. The form of address in French would denote and, at the same time, mock the high classes' attempt to imitate European behavior and trends, going back to the idea of French translation mentioned above. It also emphasized their futility. The mini-plays provided an opportunity to peek into the daily life of the rich and, in theory, elegant carioca society. The Brazilian capital was thus dramatically exposed in all its deficiencies and contradictions. The female characters in these *cenias* can be read as caricatures of high-society women. Most of them, in Do Rio's fiction, are naive and vain people, worried about appearances and superficial things. Even the more practical women who know how to navigate this artificial world, gaining some agency over their own destinies, are preoccupied with trivial stuff and have exaggerated concern about their appearance. In "O amor é como o Chá" (Love is like Tea), published in the *Correio* in August of 1905, Do Rio also deals with bourgeois love. The

²³⁶ Veronica Kelly, "Beauty and the Market: Actress Postcards and their Senders in Early Twentieth-Century Australia," *New Theatre Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (2004): 100.

salon of Mme. Baronesa de Sousa is the place for another lecture. It is the first time João do Rio publishes a *cena teatral* in this newspaper with the characteristics he would repeat in subsequent texts. The Barão de Belfort teaches a class about womanizers (*Conquistadores*), focusing on the consequences for the women, their “victims.”²³⁷ His audience initially disagrees with his statements and blames women for their misfortunes, but Mme. Sousa — after listening to the Barão in silence — concludes that “I believe that there is nothing like the victim role when you have the reward of a brief moment.”²³⁸ At the end, it is made clear that she and Belfort are lovers. The tale is not about moralizing teachings but about the hypocrisy of the main characters.

Like in the Baronesa’s example, many of the plays dealt with love and even women’s sexual lives, the gender roles attributed to them and how they navigate these situations. That is the case of madame Josephina Peres in the *cena* “*Comparações*” (1905), who is described as “28 years old. Edgy and practical beauty. Black eyes that look like two wells of unknown things. She is her husband’s most determined assistant, the good Osório.”²³⁹ She is responsible for keeping their mansion and lavish lifestyle by obtaining money from wealthy lovers. In the *cena*, she convinces one of them to buy dresses for her. Appealing to humor, Josephina’s tale could be considered surprising by at least part of the readership since the protagonist does not refuse her solicitors as the morals of the time dictate, but tries to explore which (dis)advantages that situation would bring to her life. The circumstances presented to Mme. Peres blur the division of moral and immoral behavior. She is doing what is best for her in the given situation. The character is capable of independently dealing with the circumstances presented to her without losing control of the situation and using it to her advantage, outsmarting men. On the other hand, her savviness is driven by superficial reasons.

²³⁷ João do Rio, “O Amor é como o Chá,” *Correio Paulistano*, Aug. 31, 1905, I.

²³⁸ In the original: “Pois eu acredito que não há como esse papel de vítima quando se tem a recompensa de um breve instante.” João do Rio, “O Amor é como o Chá,” I.

²³⁹ In the original: “JOSEPHINA PERES – 28 anos. Beleza nervosa e prática. Olhos negros que parecem dois poços de coisas ignotas. A mais decidida auxiliar do marido, o bom Osório.” João do Rio, “*Comparações*,” *Correio Paulistano*, Dec. 08, 1905, I.

As Marshik points out “Modernism's ethics of indecency results in texts that prod readers to rethink their attitudes toward sexual deviance and to reject — or at least complicate — the binary of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ upon which social purity, obscenity laws, and treatment of purported deviants were based. [...] By revealing that strenuous moral dichotomies and hierarchies become unworkable in practice, they gently encouraged readers to refine their notions of vice and virtue.”²⁴⁰ The behaviors of Do Rio’s fictional women from Rio de Janeiro invite São Paulo’s readers to reflect on the defects in the federal capital’s model of modernization. The *cenas teatrais* are pedagogical in this regard and, to a certain extent, also stimulate the questioning of moral codes and ideals.

As in the cases of Baronesa and Josephina, luxurious halls in Rio de Janeiro are the common setting for the *cenas teatrais*. They are presented as a mixture of several objects which symbolize the wealth and taste of the characters. Words in French are spread throughout the texts to describe furniture and decoration. Imported objects seem to give a cosmopolitan aura to the room, while showing a *bric-à-brac* that does not necessarily make sense together and would not be part of the reality for most of the Brazilians. As an example of a setting created by Do Rio for these *cenas*, I quote at length the opening note of “Noiva!” (Bride!) from 1906, that sets the scene for this literary postcard:

The wonder of the hall seems to fade in the muffled glow of the sleepy lamps. It comes from the garden, where the mysterious light of the stars pulses, a harsh and intoxicating perfume of dracaena and magnolia. The curtains seem to heave from time to time. On top of the 'guéridons', in the curious and extravagant 'porte-bibelots', are piled up the faience from Menton, the ivories from China, the bronzes from the French industry, the enamels from Japan. On the floor, skins of a black tiger, a white bear, and Mongolian goats, mixed with soft cushions embroidered with silk thread and gold thread. In the tall vases, fresh sprigs of fresh roses. It's ten o'clock at night. Jorge de Alencar, leaning on the 'bergère', seems to be engulfed in the beauty of the black night, all ornated by the splendid scintillation of the stars. Enters Margarida de Ferral, 17 years old, engaged. She looks like a bunch of eglantines, the chirp of a bird, the sound of a crystal – it's the very joy in her naive grace. To the astonishment of contemporaries and especially female contemporaries, her father manages to give her, pure in soul and spirit, to the happy Pedro Abrantes – a monster of jealousy and luck....²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Marshik, *British Modernism and Censorship*, 8.

²⁴¹ In the original: “A maravilha do salão parece esmaecer no amortecido clarão das lâmpadas sonolentas. Vem do jardim, onde palpita a misteriosa luz das estrelas, um perfume áspero e inebriante de dracena e de magnólia. As cortinas parecem arfar de vez em quando. Por cima dos ‘guéridons’, nos ‘porte-bibelots’ curiosos e extravagantes, amontoam-se as faianças de Menton, os marfins da China, os bronzes da indústria francesa, os esmaltes do Japão. Pelo soalho, peles de tigre negro, de urso branco, de cabras da Mongólia, de mistura com uns macios almofadões bordados a fio de seda e a fio de ouro. Nos altos jarrões, ramos frescos de rosas frescas. São dez horas da noite. Jorge de Alencar, recostado na ‘bergère’, parece engolfado na beleza da noite negra, toda tauxiada do cintilamento esplêndido das estrelas. Entra Margarida de Ferral, 17 anos, noiva. Parece um ramo de eglantinas, o gorjeio de um pássaro, o som de

The excerpt occupies a good portion of the first (of 2) columns in the *Correio Paulistano*. It evokes the ostentatious lifestyle of mademoiselle Ferral and her family. It also provides the readers with a description of the scenery of the *cena teatral* and presents its characters. This strategy is repeated in other *cenar*s in the newspaper. The short description gives clues to the personalities of Margarida and Jorge. The latter is caught in a contemplative pose, which could imply carelessness, both in relation to the mansion as to Margarida, whose main attribute, in turn, is to be engaged to a man described as a “monster.” João do Rio’s writing instigates the reader’s senses through a description that appeals to the visual elements and smells, bringing the reader inside Margarida’s home and private life. Throughout the text, it is clear that the concerns with the material aspects of her existence and, especially, her wedding party and the impression it would make among Rio de Janeiro high-society, dominate Margarida’s concerns. These concerns override any real feelings towards her fiancé, except for the implied fear she has of his tempestuous and possessive personality, which she tries to dismiss as a regular quality that is typical of men. Between the lines, it is also clear that she is confused. Even though she does not seem to be sure of what she really wants, Miss Ferral follows the societal conventions and expectations. She has no self-belonging or agency as she gives up any personal freedom after the wedding, even though she does not seem to think about that. She becomes a toy or a bibelot tossed around by her father and future husband, while distracted with appearances and social conventions. This behavior is in consonance with what Do Rio says about the federal capital’s society as a whole. It is a society based on appearances and theatricality in the sense that it is posing and pretending to be something that, deeply, it is not. There is no awareness about the directions taken as ideal or even mandatory, according to João do Rio. The city of Rio de Janeiro seems to be modern, but it is just covered in a thin and superficial layer to keep the appearances with no real

um cristal – é a própria alegria na sua graça ingênua. Para assombro dos contemporâneos e principalmente das contemporâneas, o pai consegue dá-la pura de alma e de espírito ao felicíssimo Pedro Abrantes – um monstro de ciúmes e de sorte...” João do Rio, “Noiva!” *Correio Paulistano*, Dec. 17, 1906, I. (Italics in the original).

change for the better. It is not authentic but only an imitation of Paris, or, under the writer's eye, even a parody of the French capital. The *cena* thus invites the readers to imagine a printed theater in the daily newspaper and to think about their imagined community while seeing Rio de Janeiro in its supposed true colors.

In João do Rio's literary postcards in the *Correio*, this idiosyncratic situation of the federal capital is made explicit: it is a world that could be curious and, in a certain way, "exotic" – to use Do Rio's term again – reversing the logic of what was considered chic and weird or peculiar at the time. An explicit example of this reverse logic is found in "A Última Novidade" (The Latest Novelty), from 1907. In this *cena*, Mme. Alice Gomensoro's house is defined as "the novelty fair and the bazaar of exoticism, and whoever wants to feel the current of Rio's futility, just spend a few hours on a Thursday in the pink hall, authentic 18th century."²⁴² The ironic statement about the authenticity of her hall is combined with direct examples of what she and her guest consider "exotic." If in the previous chapter of this thesis the Carnival celebrations were exotic in the sense of other or weird, in this text the term 'exotic' appears to have two meanings: for Gomensoro and her guests it means peculiar, attractive because of its otherness, found especially in popular practices and culture. For the narrator of the text, it means "out of place." Playing with these connotations, the narrator emphasizes the emptiness of Gomensoro's constant search for novelties that, in his opinion, only proves her ignorance and makes her look "exotic" in his eyes. As an example, he mentions the latest fashion of discussing the authenticity of paintings. In the story, the host and her guests are fascinated by the words of a foreign "expert" in art who is clearly tricking them into believing that fake pieces of art are original. Appealing to irony, Do Rio makes fun of the supposed novelty of this subject and their knowledge about it: "Suddenly, charming ladies and gentlemen who have no idea of what the value of a Tintoretto, a Van Dyck, or a Frans Hals is, emerge as deep connoisseurs of the Italian Renaissance,

²⁴² In the original: "Gomensoro como a feira da novidade e o bazar do exotismo, e quem quizer sentir a corrente da futilidade carioca basta passar algumas horas de uma quinta-feira no salão cor de rosa, autêntico século XVIII." João do Rio, "A última novidade," *Correio Paulistano*, Aug. 15, 1907, 1.

the Dutch school, the Louvre galleries.”²⁴³ The narrator finds it funny and is entertained with the “latest novelty” that is hundreds of years old: “And frankly, I found them [Gomensoro and her companions] delightful – these gentlemen had discovered the latest novelty in paintings from four centuries ago – which is always an effort....”²⁴⁴ The narrator, on the other hand, not only knows about these artists, but is in the position to criticize others because of their alleged ignorance.

This anecdote could, again, be compared to Rio de Janeiro’s modernization, which had a superficial “varnish” covering the city, which also manifested in social relations. The writer also postulates the inadequacy of the “pretending to be European” lifestyle. The treatment of popular practices as exotic was mocked by the narrator. To him, Mme. Gomensoro is “a symbol, it is the representation of that exhausted society that Paris, the French newspapers, the disease of elegance and *rastaquerismo* transform into a bunch of exogenous degenerates.”²⁴⁵ The term “*rastaquerismo*,” derived from the French *rastaquouère*, could refer both to people who like to display their wealth and to rudeness or little education. It could also be translated as “nouveau riche.”²⁴⁶ João do Rio returns to the idea of a coverage camouflaging the reality of high society, mentioned in his texts about carioca audiences: “A society refined with the promptness with which the avenues were opened, having barely stuck the enamel covering the savage.”²⁴⁷ Once again, João do Rio highlights the erroneous self-image that the elite has of itself. When dealing with the elegant carioca, Do Rio considers these snob attitudes nonsense. He describes the carioca in his relation to ‘Europe’ as follows: “For the

²⁴³ In the original: “De súbito, damas encantadoras e cavalheiros que não fazem ideia do que seja o valor de um Tintoretto, de um Van Dick, ou de um Frans Hals, surgem conhecedores profundos do renascimento italiano, da escola holandesa, das galerias do Louvre.” João do Rio, “A última novidade,” I. The text refers to: the Italian painter Tintoretto, born Jacopo Robusti, (1518-1594), the Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) and the Dutch painter Frans Hals (1582-1666)

²⁴⁴ In the original: “E, francamente, achei-os deliciosos – esses senhores haviam descoberto a última novidade em quadros de quatro séculos passados – o que é sempre um esforço...” João do Rio, “A última novidade,” I.

²⁴⁵ In the original: “O exotismo! mme. Alice Gomensoro é para mim um símbolo, é a representação dessa sociedade de esgotados que Paris, os jornais franceses, a doença da elegância e do rastaquerismo transformam num bando de degenerados exótomanos./ *Il nous faut du nouveau /N'en fat-il plus au monde.*” João do Rio, “A última novidade,” I.

²⁴⁶ See: in *Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa* [online], 2008-2020, <https://dicionario.priberam.org/rastaquera> [consult: 01-07-2020]. About the term’s origin: “Late 19th century; earliest use found in Mary Braddon (1835–1915), novelist. From French *rastaquouère*, *rastacouère*, *rastaquère* from South American Spanish *rastracueros*, *arrastracueros* (also *rastracuero*, *arrastracuero*) contemptible person, a nobody, apparently literally ‘person who crawls or drags himself along naked’ from Spanish *arrastrar* to drag + *cueros*, plural of *cuero* leather, hide (from classical Latin *corium*).” See: Oxford Lexico <https://www.lexico.com/definicion/rastaquouere> [consult: 27-10-2021].

²⁴⁷ In the original: “Sociedade refinada com a presteza com que se abriram as avenidas, tendo mal preso o esmalte encobridor do selvagem.” João do Rio, “A última novidade,” I.

European, he is an exotic, but in his anger, his delirium, his neurosis adopts the European attitude and looks for the exotic, enjoying the human Babel little by little but in a hurry.”²⁴⁸ The high society fails to recognize its origin and lack of knowledge, and, in the hurry to appear civilized, it does not learn anything. The texts then provide a comic portrayal of Rio de Janeiro’s elite that could easily be mocked by its futility.

What is common in the portrayal of carioca women is the male gaze pervading the interactions and, at the same time, judging these characters. To do so in the *cenar* teatrais, João do Rio also plays with characters that are recurrent in his prose and considered his alter-egos by literary critics: the Barão de Belfort and Godofredo de Alencar, both characters from *A Escola dos Vícios* (analyzed in the previous chapter).²⁴⁹ The two are depicted as cultured and elegant dandies, and they are commonly judgmental in their interactions with female characters. Here, I focus on the Barão, who appears for the first time in the pages of the *Correio Paulistano* in 1905, when he is described as “this old dandy, always impeccable, capable of saying the most horrible things with perfect distinction,”²⁵⁰ a description similar to the one presented in *A Escola dos Vícios* (1906). His presence in the *cenar* could be understood as João do Rio’s wink at the reader as he inserts himself (or a character reminiscent of him) into the plots of the different *cenar*s. In several texts, the dandy Barão de Belfort alternates between being an ally of the female characters and their judge at the same time, never giving up on his ironic and even cruel commentaries, regardless of his proximity to these women. As an elegant, middle-aged man, Belfort comments on the latest gossip and gives lectures about life. It is through this male gaze that the behavior of the madames and mademoiselles is evaluated.

²⁴⁸ In the original: “Para o europeu, é um exótico, mas a sua raiva, o seu delírio, a sua nevrose é tomar a atitude europeia e procurar o exótico, gozando por partes mas apressadamente os aspectos da Babel humana. Daí esse cansaço contínuo, esse bocejo permanente e a intermitente fúria de novidade que o sacode.” João do Rio, “A última novidade”, I.

²⁴⁹ About João do Rio’s alter-egos, see: Rodrigues, *João do Rio: Vida*.

²⁵⁰ In the original: “Barão de Belfort, esse velho *dandy*, sempre impecável, capaz de dizer as coisas mais horrendas com uma perfeita distinção.” João do Rio, “Figuras de Inverno”, São Paulo: *Correio Paulistano*, Jun. 29, 1905, I. This is the earliest appearance of the Barão de Belfort I could identify. “Figuras de Inverno” (“Winter Figures”) is the third João do Rio piece in the *paulista* newspaper. The fictional tale is not presented as a *cena* teatral per se but borrows several of their elements. The story, slightly modified, was published later in the volume *Dentro da Noite* (1910), under the title “Duas Criaturas” (“Two Creatures”). The book was a collection of short stories based on several non-standard behaviours, such as the breaking of moral codes, but also fetishes and sexual practices considered unusual at the time.

Nonetheless, the dandy himself challenges gender barriers. In *Gender on the Divide*, Jessica R. Feldman analyses the dandy figure in modernist literature and argues that “the very displacement [is] crucial to ‘placing’ dandyism: it exists in its purest form always at the periphery of one’s vision, often in a foreign language or a text requiring decipherment.”²⁵¹ Feldman adds that dandies are “artificial in dress and deportment, always elegant, often theatrical” and that “the dandies of literature are often created by artists who are also dandies.”²⁵² This was the case of João do Rio, who was well-known for dressing as a dandy, as I discuss in the next chapter. More importantly in the context of João do Rio’s *cenais teatrais* published in São Paulo, Feldman argues that “Dandyism exists in the field of force between two opposing, irreconcilable notions about gender. First, the (male) dandy defines himself by attacking women. Second, so crucial are female characteristics to the dandy’s self-creation that he defines himself by embracing women, appropriating their characteristics.”²⁵³ João do Rio’s dandies are immersed in this contradiction. They criticize the bourgeoisie from the inside and repel and reprimand the female characters, but, at the same time, they are in their company all the time. Another characteristic that appears in other texts involving the Barão are his constant monologues which, with his lecturer attitude, become lessons about the society of which he is a member. João do Rio uses the character’s professorial tone to implicitly teach his readers about how shallow and artificial the bourgeoisie really are, without exempting Belfort of the same flaws.

João do Rio continued to focus on female protagonists in his plays. He did so in 1913, in response to the writer and politician Alcindo Guanabara’s opinion that the characters in his play *A Bela Madame Vargas* (1912) were not plausible. The play caused a scandal in Rio de Janeiro because of a kiss between the protagonists at the end of the first act that was considered too fiery for the standards of the time.²⁵⁴ Guanabara’s criticism, however, was not directed to that polemic fact but to the characters, which, according to him, were not credible or typically Brazilian. Do Rio wrote:

²⁵¹ Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 2.

²⁵² Feldman, *Gender on Divide*, 3.

²⁵³ Feldman, *Gender on Divide*, 6.

²⁵⁴ Levin, *Teatro de João do Rio*, XXXI.

“In principle, I think that the work of art is one that creates, that invents, that imposes a new type on the world. [...] But I am fundamentally unimaginative. My only value, if I have it, is just to reflect the moment of transformation of our customs, accentuating their essential traits.”²⁵⁵ Here, Do Rio suggests that a writer’s activity is akin to that of a photographer, registering reality as it is, and, in my reading of it, transforming everything into literary postcards. In his response to Guanabara, he also defends literature that approaches urban aspects of Brazil and criticizes Guanabara to whom “only the interior of Brazil is Brazilian.”²⁵⁶ João says that “It is against this stubbornness that I revolt, because it has in fact restrained, hindered the inspiration of our writers.”²⁵⁷ In a country whose economy is largely based on agriculture, João do Rio advocates for prose that focuses on the urban environment. He argues that the society in transformation, marked by the inauguration of *Avenida Central* (inaugurated in 1906), is not being portrayed by Brazilian writers: “Our writers seem to be afraid of capturing it”.²⁵⁸

Do Rio defends the idea that, even though Rio de Janeiro society excessively imitated Paris, this reality has to be registered by writers: “And because society is like this, will the writer renounce capturing it? No! A hundred times no! Those who have the ability to write commit a crime against history in not marking these aspects in their writings, and in not analyzing them in the theater with the hope of transforming them.”²⁵⁹ According to him, “All my characters may be imitating Paris, but they are fundamentally carioca.”²⁶⁰ Do Rio advocates not only that theater should reflect the historical moment, but also that this form of art had a transformational essence. This can be related to the

²⁵⁵ In the original: “Em princípio, eu acho que a obra de arte é aquela que cria, que inventa, que impõe um novo tipo ao mundo. [...] Mas eu sou fundamentalmente sem imaginação. O meu único valor, se por ventura o tenho, é apenas refletir o momento da transformação dos nossos costumes acentuando-lhes os traços essenciais.” João do Rio, “A Propósito de Teatro: Teatro Nacional ou Estrangeiro?”, in: ed. Níobe Abreu Peixoto, *João do Rio e o Palco: Página Teatral*. (São Paulo: Edusp, 2009), 1:239.

²⁵⁶ In the original: “só o interior do Brasil é brasileiro” João do Rio, “A Propósito de Teatro,” 240.

²⁵⁷ In the original: “É contra essa teimosia que eu me revolto, porque ela tem de fato manietado, entravado a inspiração dos nossos escritores.” João do Rio, “A Propósito de Teatro,” 240.

²⁵⁸ In the original: “Os nossos escritores parecem ter medo de o fixar.” João do Rio, “A Propósito de Teatro,” 240.

²⁵⁹ In the original: “E porque a sociedade está assim, o escritor renunciará a fixá-la? Não! Cem veres não. Os que têm a capacidade de escrever cometem um crime para com a história em não marcar esses aspectos nos seus escritos, e em não os analisar no teatro com a esperança de transformá-los.” João do Rio, “A Propósito de Teatro,” 240.

²⁶⁰ João do Rio, “A Propósito de Teatro,” 241.

pedagogical character the writer attributes to his own work. Not only does he report the conduct of Rio de Janeiro's society as it is, but he also argues that his writing could contribute to changing it.

The originality of Paulista Women

If the depiction of carioca female characters denounced the inadequacy of them in the federal capital, the portrayal of paulista women seems to assume a different function. Instead of criticism, São Paulo's women are described in more favorable terms. João do Rio opposes the carioca artificiality to the authenticity of the paulista identity and its contribution to the construction of modernity in the country. This is the case of the protagonist of the play *Eva: a propósito de uma menina original* (1915). The title is a wordplay on the biblical original sin, but focusing on *originality*, in the sense of uniqueness, of a paulista young woman. As the title indicates, the protagonist is in diametrical opposition to the imitative character of Rio de Janeiro's inhabitants. Eva is original, has her own ideas and does not copy European behaviors, even though the same could not be said about her companions. The play is set in a farm in Ribeirão Preto, a rich city in the countryside of São Paulo state, well-known for its coffee production, where the characters, all part of the upper classes, rest after vacationing in Europe. The protagonist is the 22-years-old Eva de Azambuja, who "possesses the *chic* of not pretending", and who goes against characters who the author defines as "those elegant people who make the tradition of paulista customs disappear", meaning all the other people in the farm. Eva is described as seductive, a "mix of child and diplomat".²⁶¹ She is not afraid of flirting and asking blunt questions to her admirers and does not care about marriage. Eva is the exact opposite of Margarida Ferral, presented in the cena "Noiva!" The paulista character is friends with another guest, Godofredo de Alencar, distinct this time from the "Prince of Horror" in *A Escola dos Vícios*. He is a version of Jorge, Ferral's cousin, and they have the same surname, emphasizing Do Rio's use of the *Correio* as an

²⁶¹ In the original: "Tem o *chic* de não fingir." / "esses elegantes fazem desaparecer a tradição dos costumes paulistas" / "misto de criança e diplomata", João do Rio, *Eva: Peça em 3 Atos* (Rio de Janeiro: Villas Boas & Cia, 19??), 21; 7 and 67.

experimental field. In this reappearance, Alencar is described as an elegant journalist, the “king of crônica” who acts like a spectator most of the time, but likes to engage in the “sport of words” and “the dangerous exercise of irony.”²⁶² This description could again be associated with João do Rio himself, as the author was again inserting his alter-ego in the text. Alencar defines the farm as a translated version of a real one: it was not authentic and was adapted to the enjoyment of the guests. Eva is the only original person there.

The imitation of Paris has contaminated all the other characters. Talking to Eva’s mother, Alencar affirms that: “We are sadly uprooted, *des deracinés, ma très chère amie...* Travel has lost us, forcing us to represent Paris in the countryside....”²⁶³ The statement mixing Portuguese and French is clearly ironic, demonstrating that Alencar is a hypocrite and incurs the same mistakes he accuses his peers of. Another similarity between the play and the *cenar teatrais* is the incorporation of current discussions in the plot, in a photograph of the moment. One example is the commentaries on the European migrants in the farm who have replaced the slave workforce in agriculture. According to Alencar, the farm is not what is usually expected from a rural environment: “Here, the workers, instead of blacks, are Italians visited by the Consul and defended (*per dio Santo!*) by the *patronato geral dos agricultores*.”²⁶⁴ Once again the writer includes phrases in another language, mimicking the migrants.

Eva received a lot of attention in the paulista press. João do Rio is known for his work as an interviewer, but the analysis of the *Correio Paulistano* gives us the rare opportunity to see him being interviewed. According to the newspaper, the interview was conducted by the *Agencia Americana* in Rio de Janeiro because of the buzz created by the announcement of his play which would open in São

²⁶² João do Rio, *Eva*, 86 and 25. The description is similar to the description of the book *Frases e Crônicas de Godofredo de Alencar*, from 1916, and centered on that character.

²⁶³ “Somos tristemente desarraigados, *des deracinés, ma très chère amie...* As viagens perderam-nos, obrigando-nos a representar Paris na roça...” João do Rio, *Eva*, 16.

²⁶⁴ In the original: “Cá os trabalhadores, em vez de pretos são italianos visitados pelo Cônsul e defendidos (*per dio Santo!*) pelo *patronato geral dos agricultores*.” João do Rio, *Eva*, 35. The “*patronato geral dos agricultores*” is probably a reference to the *Patronato Agrícola* (1912-1931), an institution linked to the Ministry of Agriculture that promoted migration and colonization in São Paulo, as well as defended the rights of migrants. See: Acervo Histórico da Assembleia Legislativa do Estado de São Paulo in: <https://app.al.sp.gov.br/acervohistorico/exposicoes/parlamentares-paulistas/egas/patronato-agricola/> Accessed in: Jul. 01, 2022.

Paulo. According to him, “*Eva* is a play without a harsh word, without a situation that is aggressive to common morality and where there is only one kiss — this one even at the end and in front of twelve people on stage.”²⁶⁵ It is a clear reference to the scandal of the *Madame Vargas* kiss.

Further in the interview, he defines the protagonist: “The type of *Eva*, original and willing and good girl, is an amalgam of the very gentle ladies of our society.”²⁶⁶ “Our” in this case means paulista. The author states that: “*Eva* was really written with the wish that S. Paulo would be its first host and would decide its future. The artists of the *Companhia Adelina Abranches*, who are so fond of the artistic capital of Brazil, agreed with me. And so *Eva* will appear in the paradise for which it was made....”²⁶⁷ Once more, João do Rio refers to Sarah Bernhardt's statement, evoking São Paulo as the capital connected to art. Asked if this wish came from the fact that the plot is set in São Paulo, João do Rio answers that: “*Eva* could only take place in São Paulo. Its plot, its types would be nonsense anywhere else on the planet.”²⁶⁸ Then, he affirms that his “literary temperament” is not regional and that he wanted to have São Paulo as the setting for the play because the State was “the only ‘country’ in Brazil. I wanted it because of a feeling of mental decentralization.”²⁶⁹

The idea that “João from Rio” did not consider himself a regional author seems contradictory at first. However, I argue that the author gave an important clue while talking about “decentralization.” In 1915, the author had left the *Gazeta de Notícias*, where he worked from 1903 to 1914. He started as a reporter and left as an editor-in-chief of one of the most popular newspapers in the country. He was attacked incessantly, especially by the journalist Humberto de Campos (1886-

²⁶⁵ In the original: “‘Eva’ é uma peça sem uma palavra arisca, sem uma situação agressiva à moral comum e onde só há um beijo — esse mesmo no fim e à vista de doze pessoas no palco.” “A *Eva* de Paulo Barreto,” *Correio Paulistano*, Jun. 24, 1915, 2. This interview was republished in *Teatro/João do Rio*, selected and introduced by Graziela Betting (São Paulo: Carambaia, 2015).

²⁶⁶ In the original: “O tipo de *Eva*, menina original e voluntariosa e boa, é tudo quanto há de mais reprodução de uma gentilíssima senhorita da nossa sociedade.” “A *Eva* de Paulo Barreto”, 2.

²⁶⁷ In the original: “‘Eva’ foi realmente escrita com o desejo de que S. Paulo lhe fizesse o primeiro acolhimento e decidisse do seu futuro. Os artistas da Companhia Adelina Abranches, que tanto estimam a capital artística do Brasil, concordaram comigo. E assim ‘Eva’ surgirá no paraíso para que foi feita...” “/” “Não. ‘Eva’ só se pode passar em S. Paulo. O seu entrecho, os seus tipos seriam um disparate noutro qualquer ponto do planeta. Mas nem eu estudei as fazendas de S. Paulo, nem meu feito literário é regional. Eu desenho ao contrário a elegância parisiense de algumas paulistas, que passam quinze dias na fazenda, ao voltar das suas habitações da Etoile em Paris.” “A *Eva* de Paulo Barreto”, 2.

²⁶⁸ In the original: “‘Eva’ só se pode passar em S. Paulo. O seu entrecho, os seus tipos seriam um disparate noutro qualquer ponto do planeta.” “A *Eva* de Paulo Barreto”, 2.

²⁶⁹ In the original: “o único ‘país’ do Brasil. Quis por um sentimento de descentralização mental.” “A *Eva* de Paulo Barreto”, 2.

1934) on the pages of the *O Imparcial* newspaper from Rio de Janeiro. Campos wrote articles mocking João do Rio's column *Pall-Mall Rio*, in the carioca newspaper *O Paiz*, as soon as it was published.²⁷⁰ His offensives used racial prejudices and homophobic expressions to diminish João do Rio and his work, including the dandyish way in which he dressed. On the bright side, Do Rio's connections to Portugal bore fruits in the same year, with the magazine *Atlântida* which simultaneously circulated for five years both in Brazil and Portugal. In her research about João do Rio's connection to Portugal, Cristiane D'Avila points out that, in cooperation with the Portuguese writers João de Barros (1881-1960) and Carlos Malheiro Dias (1875-1941), Do Rio made efforts to bring the two countries closer together at a time of strong anti-Portuguese sentiments in Brazil, when national identity was being debated through the denial of the colonial heritage.²⁷¹ The decentralization mentioned by Do Rio in his interview with the *Agencia Americana* also implied expanding outside the borders of Brazil.

²⁷⁰ According to João do Rio's biographers, even his mother tried to intervene and stop Campos' persecution of her son and Do Rio agreed to leave Rio for a while as a way of convincing Campos to cease the attacks. On this topic, see: Rodrigues, *João do Rio*, 2010 and Magalhães Junior, *A Vida Vertiginosa*, 1978.

²⁷¹ Cristiane D'Avila ed., "Nota da Organizadora" in João do Rio, *Cartas de João do Rio a Carlos Malheiros Dias* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 2013), 19-24.



Figure 3.2 – *Gazeta de Notícias*, Rio de Janeiro, 14 July 1915, p.3. A talk with Aura Abranches, the role's creator.

"The graceful and intelligent actress Aura Abranches, who played yesterday, in São Paulo, Eva's role, in João do Rio's play".

At the same time, the *Correio Paulistano* offered him another terrain in which to invest his work. In São Paulo, Do Rio had the authority and space to write practically uncontested. The collaboration, sustained for ten years (1905-1915), showed that he had praised the paulista capital, and the compliments in the opening of *Eva* are no different. In the interview with the *Agencia Americana*, he affirms that it was an old dream to open *Eva* in São Paulo, "as in the center of mental Brazil, an artwork that had an immediate judgment from the general public."²⁷² Theater is unique among other literary forms, in the sense that plays receive the immediate opinion of the public.

It is also important to consider the financial advantages of fostering his persona in São Paulo and aligning himself with the paulista narrative of success. In his texts and interviews, Do Rio does not mention any financial concerns or goals motivating his collaboration with the *Correio*, his conferences and plays presented in the city, and his alleged admiration of

São Paulo. However, the multiple publications in several newspapers and the constant collection of these texts in book format were among his strategies to survive from his writing, being one of the first writers to do so. Furthermore, when *Eva* was presented, the author faced even harsher circumstances. World War I was in course, and the Brazilian press suffered the consequences of the conflict. In a letter to his friend, the Portuguese writer João de Barros (1881-1960), Do Rio comments on these difficulties. According to him, the economic crisis affected the whole country, and he should have stayed in Portugal after his latest visit in March 1914. He considered 1914 a lost year and added:

²⁷² "A *Eva* de Paulo Barreto", 2.

“Imagine that in the *Gazeta* they do not even pay my salary. Total lack of money. Let's hope for better days.”²⁷³

These issues would, however, never appear in his public justifications for choosing São Paulo's audience as the first to see *Eva*. In another interview, this time with editors of the *Correio*, he affirmed that chance also played a role because of the passage of the Portuguese troupe *Companhia Adelina Abranches*, with Aura Abranches (1892-1962) and Alexandre de Azevedo (1873-1954) as Eva and Jorge, respectively. Do Rio affirms that he wrote the play with these actors in mind: “Only, the company came to S. Paulo. And I preferred S. Paulo to Rio in my old love for S. Paulo – for my *Eva*'s first judgment. And then praise Chance, fear of the gods. Now, however, after contentment — fear...”²⁷⁴ Aura's picture



Figure 3.3 – Cover of *Eva, peça em 3 actos: a propósito de uma menina original*, book edition. Rio de Janeiro: Villas Boas & C., 19??

would become the cover of the book version of the play (Fig. 3.2 and 3.3).

The reception of *Eva* in the paulista press was very positive, proving Do Rio's alleged fear to be unjustified. As an example, Oswald de Andrade (1890-1954) published a review of the play in the

²⁷³ In the original: “Imagina que na *Gazeta* nem pagam os meus honorários. Falta de dinheiro total. Esperemos melhores dias.” João do Rio, in Claudia Poncioni & Virginia Camilotti, eds, *Muito d'Alma: cartas de Paulo Barreto (João do Rio) a João de Barros - 1909-1921*. (Rio de Janeiro: Academia Brasileira de Letras; Garamond, 2015), 99-100.

²⁷⁴ In the original: “– Mas Alexandre Azevedo insistiu. Eu estava preocupado com as palestras de uma encantadora menina, com que fizera uma viagem. Escrevi a comédia para Aura Abranches e Alexandre Azevedo; e os outros papeis, que são recordações de pessoas conhecidas, tracei-os para os demais artistas. Apenas, a companhia vinha a S. Paulo. E preferi S. Paulo ao Rio no meu velho amor por S. Paulo – para o julgamento primeiro da minha *Eva*. E daí louvar o Acaso, temor dos deuses. Agora, porém, depois do contentamento – o medo...” “JOÃO DO RIO [...]” - Jul. 13, 1915, 3.

paulista magazine *O Pirralho*. Comparing the protagonists to Adam and Eve, Andrade highlighted Eva's peculiarities: "And as she is a great connoisseur of the current times, she makes her almost military entrance. [...] she invades the scene in a tumult that turns the scene upside down. And in the face of Adam's [Jorge Fontoura] enchanted surprise, she organizes trenches, finds allies, challenges him...."²⁷⁵ For Andrade, "national theater in its beginning" could not wish for something better than Do Rio's play.²⁷⁶ He implies that what came before was not authentically national and considers the play to be permeated by a subtle symbolism: "And how can symbolism in comedy be better than the beautiful, the strong, the intelligent intrigue that João do Rio invented? It's going to be tough. In Eva there is all the beautiful fable of the woman."²⁷⁷ Andrade also said that Jorge was an Adam to make all men blush. João do Rio's "admirable creation was certainly the best proof of superiority that the female public that night had in life. But what a weakness, gentlemen! And João do Rio committed the indiscretion of implying that all men are like that, of the same clay!"²⁷⁸ Andrade seems to consider *Eva* national because it is in tune with the current times, with a strong female protagonist who is not afraid of taking charge of her own life and does not pretend to be Parisian like the other characters. She reads the situations and sees through the façade of her peers, and with that understanding, she can better navigate this world. Years later, Andrade defended the view that modern Brazil should be aware of its own heritage and break down the colonial mentality and simple imitation.²⁷⁹

The valuing of the paulista women was the theme of another short text from 1915, "A Mulher Paulista," published in the magazine *Revista da Semana* in Rio de Janeiro. Do Rio was not afraid of

²⁷⁵ In the original: "E como é grande conhecedora dos tempos que correm, faz a sua entrada quase militar. [...] ela invade a cena num tumulto que a revolve. E ante a surpresa encantada de Adão, organiza trincheiras, arranja aliados, o desafia..." Oswald de Andrade, "Lanterna Mágica – Eva," *O Pirralho*, Jul. 17, 1915, 9.

²⁷⁶ In the original: "Poder-se-ia desejar melhor para o teatro nacional em começo? Creio que não apesar da opinião mal redigida mas firme do cronista do *Diário Popular*." Andrade, "Lanterna Mágica – Eva", 9.

²⁷⁷ In the original: "Erra por toda a peça um sutil simbolismo. E como simbolismo em comédia haverá melhor do que a bela, a forte, a inteligente intriga que João do Rio inventou? Será difícil. Em Eva há toda a fábula linda da mulher." Andrade, "Lanterna Mágica – Eva", 9.

²⁷⁸ In the original: "Alexandre Azevedo foi um Adão de fazer corar todos os homens. Arrebatado, crédulo, cheio da ideia fixa, a sua criação admirável, foi decerto a melhor constatação de superioridade que o público feminino daquela noite teve em vida. Mas que fraqueza, senhores! E João do Rio cometeu a indiscrição de insinuar que todos são assim, do mesmo barro!" Andrade, "Lanterna Mágica – Eva", 10.

²⁷⁹ See: Luís Madureira, "A Cannibal Recipe to Turn a Dessert Country into the Main Course: Brazilian "Antropofagia" and the Dilemma of Development," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41, no. 2 (2005): 96-125.

exalting the paulista in his hometown. He affirms that: “S. Paulo, (so fate wanted it), is the heart and brain of Brazil” guiding the country towards civilization.²⁸⁰ He states that the women from São Paulo should be studied since they are “the true shapers of nationalities” especially for their role in the education of future citizens, and he makes an ode to the paulista women.²⁸¹ They were able to educate their children in a modern, transatlantic yet patriotic way, creating well-prepared citizens among both the high and poor classes. For the narrator “The secret of São Paulo's brilliance, of the wide patriotism of its statesmen, lies in the heart of the family where women exercise the priesthood of kindness and sweetness... This is about morality. As for the physical, it is the same.”²⁸² The smart and brave Eva was representative of these women, a character that should be admired and imitated. She was also a representation of the well-educated paulista youth, which was praised by Do Rio in 1915.

In the next chapter, I analyze João do Rio's conferences and how he leaves the backstage of the theater and of newsrooms to take the front of the stage, presenting lectures which would instruct about proper modernity and foster his public persona in São Paulo. The literary postcard of himself takes another dimension in front of a live audience. While the criticism directed at Rio de Janeiro's elite is still present, the author also comments on the value of popular culture for a nation whose identity was still under construction, and criticizes (in a misogynistic way) the carioca public in the conferences.

²⁸⁰ In the original: “S. Paulo, (assim o quis o destino), é coração e cérebro do Brasil, e guia foi e guia será da civilização.” João do Rio, “A Mulher Paulista”, *Revista da Semana*, Dec. 04, 1915, I.

²⁸¹ In the original: “São as mulheres, as mães, as esposas, as filhas, as verdadeiras formadoras das nacionalidades.” João do Rio, “A Mulher Paulista”, I.

²⁸² In the original: “O segredo do brilho de S. Paulo, do patriotismo largo dos seus estadistas está no coração da família onde as mulheres exercem o sacerdócio da bondade e da doçura... Isto quanto ao moral. Quanto ao físico dá-se o mesmo.” João do Rio, “A Mulher Paulista”, I.