

**Textes et contextes**

ISSN : 1961-991X

: Université de Bourgogne

6 | 2011

Discours autoritaires et résistances aux XX<sup>e</sup> et XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles

## Censorship negotiations with figures of the social imaginary

*Négociations de la censure avec les figures de l'imaginaire social*

01 December 2011.

**Mayra Rodrigues Gomes Eliza Bachega Casadei**

🌀 <http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=315>

Licence CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Mayra Rodrigues Gomes Eliza Bachega Casadei, « Censorship negotiations with figures of the social imaginary », *Textes et contextes* [], 6 | 2011, 01 December 2011 and connection on 24 November 2024. Copyright : [Licence CC BY 4.0 \(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). URL : <http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=315>

PREO

# Censorship negotiations with figures of the social imaginary

*Négociations de la censure avec les figures de l'imaginaire social*

## **Textes et contextes**

01 December 2011.

6 | 2011

Discours autoritaires et résistances aux XX<sup>e</sup> et XXI<sup>e</sup> siècles

Mayra Rodrigues Gomes Eliza Bachega Casadei

🔗 <http://preo.u-bourgogne.fr/textesetcontextes/index.php?id=315>

Licence CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

- 
1. Introduction
  2. *Deus the Pague* (God Bless You)
  3. Censorship in 'Deus the Pague' and authoritarian discourse
  4. Diffuse discourses on social justice
  5. Beggar as an established figure in social imaginary
  6. Final Conclusions: the figure of the beggar as a nexus of discourses
- 

## **1. Introduction**

- 1 We conducted an extensive research on censorship, sponsored by the FAPESP (Foundation for Research Support of São Paulo)<sup>1</sup>. It focuses on censorship processes in the theatre, leading to the investigation of censored words, their category and text implications, the tracking of public opinion about the interventions of censors, as well as the journalistic manifestations of these issues, and to the analysis of special cases, such as the one we will explore later on in this article.
- 2 To begin with, it is necessary to describe the conditions of our corpus and the starting point of our research. The processes and plays under study belong to the 'Archive Miroel Silveira', a collection of 6,147 theatre censorship processes, conducted in the State of São

Paulo, Brazil, from 1925 to 1970. The Archive is maintained by the Library of the Escola de Comunicações e Artes da Universidade de São Paulo [School of Communication and Arts at the University of São Paulo], the institution to which we are affiliated.

- 3 We have been working with this archive since 2006 and our research is focused on the partially released plays, the ones with cuts made to words, phrases or entire scenes, in a total of 436 plays. The aim of our primary investigation conducted on these plays was to study in detail their implied meaning and to classify them according to various types of censorship.
- 4 These proceedings provided us with a quantitative overview in relation to each form of censorship adopted in accordance with its moral, political, social and religious nature. This allowed us to draw conclusions about the characteristics of censorship and its applications, according to the social or political context. The results are published in our book entitled *Forbidden Words, presuppositions and implications in theatre censorship* (Gomes et al. 2008), that shows, unequivocally, the preponderance of moral censorship over other categories.
- 5 In order to present a general idea of our findings, we point out that moral censorship involves considering each veto in the analysed corpus from a total of 348 cuts, or 52% of the censored words. The highest among them are the subjects related to sex, totalling 70 occurrences, therefore, about 20% of the cuts within the moral category.
- 6 Since the analysis of this data was conducted in relation to both social and historical contexts, we should point out that the timeline covered by the Archive encompasses two dictatorships, with all their usual state-presiding apparatuses, which fiercely over-dominated their interests. Namely, there was the Getúlio Vargas era from 1930 until 1945, followed by his re-election in 1951 until his death in 1954, and the military dictatorship from 1964 until 1985.
- 7 Defeated at the election polls and accused of fraud, Getúlio Vargas came to power through a *coup d'état* known as the “Revolution of 1930”, constituting a provisional government that would last until 1934. The political significance of this period was the establishment of the Organic Law, which gave full power to Vargas. It involved the re-

removal of State Governors, replaced by people appointed by Vargas, and the legislative dissolution. In 1934, he promulgated a new Constitution, establishing the period of his Constitutional government, which would last until 1937. That year, the Cohen Plan was disclosed: a forgotten document about a supposed Communist conspiracy to seize power in Brazil, it served as an excuse for the Congress to approve a state of war with the suspension of constitutional rights. In November of that year, the Congress was dissolved and, a month later, political parties were extinct. Vargas implemented the New State and promulgated the new Constitution, which lasted until 1945, when he was deposed. He returned triumphantly to power in 1950, elected by the people. His government lasted until 1954, when the President committed suicide in a moment of crisis in national politics. During the Vargas era, theatre censorship was established by the state government and was conducted in São Paulo by the Departamento de Diversões Públicas do Estado de São Paulo (Department of Public Entertainment of the State of São Paulo).

- 8 Although military interventions in Brazilian politics have been constant throughout its history, the Military Regime, implemented by a *coup d'état* in April of 1964, signified the first time that the military had effectively taken power, ruling the country for the next 21 years. The two major symbols of this period were the country's economic growth and a violent political and social repression. In December of 1968, AI-5 came into force, a decree that established the closure of the Congress, Assemblies and Chambers, the intervention in all states and municipalities, and the installation of surveillance on anyone who opposed the regime. In late 1968, censorship stopped being the responsibility of the state government and became that of the Federal Government, thus closing the processes contained in the 'Archive Miroel Silveira'.
- 9 We considered the interventions made under Vargas's dictatorship, which was marked by several types of censorship, including ideological and racial. We were surprised by one special case: a famous play whose author had had cuts in previous productions. Although it tackled subjects prohibited in other plays in the same social context, this play was not censored.

- 10 This intriguing situation, in which the play 'God Bless You' was written, is the motivation for this article, because we thought that, when reasonable causes for censorship had been overlooked, something was amiss, something that related to the cultural context or 'social imaginary'.
- 11 We use the term 'social imaginary' as a direct reference to the well-established concept proposed by Cornelius Castoriadis in his book about the imaginary institution of society (1978). It concerns the fact that a certain understanding and shaping of social practices orientate societies as if they were a product of nature, the nature of the society itself, and generates the knowledge and ideas that construct reality as a universe of meanings related to the reference norms of a particular group.
- 12 These guidelines are brought together as discursive formations, in the sense used by Michel Foucault (1999), and are contingent upon the fact that they could always have other features, although not necessarily in relation to their objects. However, they establish the world as such, as well as lived reality. Social imaginary creates bonds, brings people together in its social sharing and can have an expansive role (as in hegemonic discourses) or a restricted function (as in the case of culture-specific discourses, for instance, folklore).
- 13 With this in mind, we can link the notion of social imaginary to a set of circulating discourses, in the terms exposed by Patrick Charaudeau (1997), as long as we preserve two dimensions: one covering its broad and preponderant sense (with the possibility of crossing different cultures, sometimes for several centuries) and the other relating to the localised and, therefore, restricted range of guidance. *Mutatis mutandis* is used in this sense to convey the meaning of 'social imaginary', we may also use the expression 'social-discursive imaginary'.
- 14 Our working hypothesis in this article is that the answer to the above-mentioned intriguing situation may be reached with attention to the social-discursive imaginary.

## 2. *Deus Ihe Pague* (God Bless You)

- 15 *Deus Ihe Pague* is the most famous play written by Joracy Camargo and also the one which brought immense popularity to the actor

Procópio Ferreira. Its central character is 'Beggar', a character whose inner life is represented as a dialogue with another beggar called 'Other'. He lectures, with bitterness and critical disposition, about society, life, happiness, religion, property and love. His words evoke ideas related to social reform and Marxist conceptions. In fact, Beggar is an intellectual and mentions several classical thinkers, including Karl Marx, and has become very rich, whereas Other – also called *Barata* (Cockroach) – is poor, lacking the sophistication and strategic planning to be successful in the 'profession'. That is why Beggar's speech constitutes a sort of philosophy of life and carries a pedagogical tone, explaining ways and methods of begging as opposed to social conventional behaviour.

- 16 In this *quasi-monologue*, where Other is the presence that sustains the various subjects raised, the plot is based on the story of Beggar's life as told by himself. In his youth, and before he became a beggar, he was called Juca, a dedicated worker who invented, in his spare time, a textile mechanism. This invention would considerably benefit the company he worked in, but his boss, who knew about his invention, visited Mary, Juca's wife, with the intention of making her reveal her husband's projects. Mary, a very naive woman, showed him the sketches of Juca's inventions, which were immediately stolen by the employer without her noticing. When Juca returned home, he noticed the robbery and, after confronting his boss, was arrested as if he were the thief. Mary, realising her mistake, lost her sanity and was confined to an asylum, from which she later escaped, disappearing without trace.
- 17 Juca, released from prison, became a beggar who addressed the alms givers with the expression 'God bless you' and, by shrewdly saving money and living in a simple way, became a rich man. That is when he assumed a double life: one in which he slept in his ragged clothes in a slum, and another in which, as a rich man, he lived in an affluent property with the young lady Nancy, who was basically only interested in his financial support. Nancy, however, was loved by Péricles, a penniless boy from high society, who proposed to her. Always repudiated because of his financial situation, he was rejected because Nancy was fascinated with Beggar, admiring his knowledge and compelling argumentative skills.

- 18 After setting a trap for Péricles who wanted to get his money to marry Nancy, Beggar revealed himself and, with this intrigue, exposed Péricles's true temperament. In a dramatic scene at the end of the play, Nancy and Beggar meet again and end up together.
- 19 Although a common figure in smaller roles, the first time a beggar became the main character in Brazilian theatre was in the play *Adão, Eva e outros membros da família* [Adam, Eve and Other Family Members] written in 1927 by Álvaro Moreira, who influenced Joracy Camargo's work. It tells the story of a thief who became a capitalist and a beggar who turned himself into a newspaper owner. The story also unfolds clear criticism against capitalist society. This plot ends with the contradiction 'that allows a beggar and a thief to be transformed into respectable figures of the ruling class, and also of an ambiguous woman, first the lover of one and later of the other, to become a great artist' (Oscar 1985: 19).
- 20 *Deus lhe Pague*, since its inception in 1932, has been performed uninterruptedly for four decades and is to this day present on the Brazilian cultural scene. Its remarkable popularity is partly due to the role played by the Theatre Company Procópio Ferreira, which took the production on tour in Europe. As a book, it was published in several languages, including English, and in Brazil, by Editora Livraria Zelio Valverde [Zelio Valverde's Publishing Library], where it has reached thirty editions due to its success.
- 21 Both in published text and in the Archive Miroel Silveira's processes of censorship, '*Deus lhe Pague*' is classified as a comedy in three acts and nine scenes.

### **3. Censorship in '*Deus lhe Pague*' and authoritarian discourse**

- 22 In the list of processes, *Deus lhe Pague* appears twice: in DDP 0238 and DDP 6106. The former combines censorship requirements and manifestations from different dates (1943, 1945, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1962, 1966), and one publication of the play, as a book, in its 8<sup>th</sup> edition dated 1945. It comprises eleven requests of censorship: four were granted with no restrictions, one was a request

for a censorship review without the original text in the process, and six showed censorship cuts.

- 23 The first certificate maintained by the Archive, dated from 1943, registered the highest number of interventions: the barring of words or phrases in 22 parts of the play. However, the 1945 edition of the book that accompanied the process did not show these prohibitions, and a signed statement by the censor Pedroso de Carvalho was issued where he explained that the copy of the play had been replaced because of the restoration of several “lines” and in order to avoid confusion.’
- 24 We may infer that there were negotiations with the censorship department, which resulted in the release of some speeches, as can be read in the book’s notes: ‘talks restored, cuts without effect’. Thus, it was the 1945 censorship that prevailed, serving as a basis for requests made in subsequent years, so that the assessments made in 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1957 repeated the 1945 deliberations. On the other hand, since 1959, the play has been fully released.
- 25 Therefore, we will start by referring to the 1943 censorship register, noting the ‘cuts without effect’, in order to observe concurrently those which remained in 1945, and in the following years until 1959.
- 26 The play’s first cut, on page 22, remained censored until its release in 1959. The sentence pronounced by Other: ‘Guaranteed by the police, by the armed classes...’ was preceded by a series of explanations made by Beggar concerning private property, owned by the few who had legitimised it by wielding their power, and since then maintained their wealth with the support of the state apparatus. We may assume that the censor was careful to protect the image of the Police and the Army as independent of the upper classes and the government’s interests.
- 27 The next cut, on page 30, came with a note of restoration and was part of Beggar’s speech: ‘God is a word without expression. When one says, “Oh my God!” – it is like saying, “peanuts”!’ Indeed, the restoration of this passage, in relation to its context, shows that the censor had detected a special meaning in the phrase, not as an offence to the Church, but as dutiful protection, since Beggar was talking about the



disrespect and the devaluation of the word 'God' in colloquial language.

- 28 On page 95, there was another cut made in Beggar's line, when provoking Péricles: 'Do you know anyone who doesn't have any ideas about how to save Brazil?' This was followed by another, rather harmless cut on page 97, with lines restored, in the conversation between Beggar, Nancy and Péricles: 'Selfishness is the greatest obstacle! It is like a feudal castle in whose chest is kept this abominable word – property'. The context of this conversation is an explanation about the true meaning of certain words, all of them equally ridiculed by Beggar.
- 29 On pages 127 and 128, in the third act, there was a succession of harmless cuts, in the following dialogue (We have transcribed and underlined the censored passages for clarification):

Other: What is lacking is a perfect religion.

Beggar: All religions are perfect. Men are the imperfect ones. Find a sect that provides, at the time of communion, a juicy steak with potatoes instead of the Host, and we will see how it will not lack followers.

Other: I guarantee that I would take communion every day...

Beggar: Sure. Everyone wants immediate results. If all believers reflect a little on the serious commitment they make when they pray, reciting 'The Lord's Prayer', few of them would be able to repeat those words: 'forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors...'. Who forgives debts, *Mr Barata*? Religions themselves are intransigent. Suicidal people have no right to Church Mass...

- 30 On page 145, almost at the end, there was a final cut without effect, applied in 1943 and restored in 1945, which occurred in a line in Péricles' speech where he says to Nancy: 'Honest money does not go beyond what is strictly necessary for one to live. The interest, the exchange, the percentage, all money earned with money is evil'. Péricles tried to convince Nancy that happiness is in the love that he has to give.
- 31 As we may perceive, the Archive maintains the record of 7 cuts, restored between 1943 and 1945, and the only outstanding cut was the

phrase ‘Guaranteed by the police, by the armed classes...’, which remained until 1959.

- 32 The other process of *Deus Ihe Pague*, DDP 6106, had censorship requests and manifestations in 1967 and in 1968. It did not contain any censored words, but it posed the restriction ‘prohibited for minors under 10 years of age, applicable across the nation’.
- 33 In the first place, we should ask why, in the middle of Getúlio Vargas’s dictatorial regime, those lines had been re-established when we can see that, in the thirties and forties, they alluded to ideas that would not have been well accepted by an authoritarian government. Many scholars have provided an answer to this question: Vargas was a well-known theatre aficionado and a personal friend of Procópio Ferreira, who was the interpreter of *Beggar* and a promoter of the play’s popularity. We may assume that this was the result of a negotiation that benefited from Vargas’s condescension in specific circumstances.
- 34 Still, from the perspective of the censorship of then, we must question the play’s classification itself: in the published book and in the Archive Miroel Silveira’s processes, *Deus Ihe Pague* is defined as a comedy, but through the synopsis that we have provided, it is possible to see that this play is, actually, a tragedy.
- 35 In this case, we must also consider the role that this classification played, since it certainly influenced the censors. The classification as a comedy was facilitated by the fact that Joracy Camargo was the author of many comedies and vaudevilles. Nonetheless, Procópio Ferreira was the main actor in many of these comedies and already famous for his spirituous comicality. In these circumstances, the classification of comedy was plausible and censors could perceive, in the most provocative speeches, the comical tone that Procópio would impart to disguise the real sense.
- 36 However, in *Deus Ihe Pague*, there is a notorious proposal of social revolution presenting characteristics of political manifestos, which refer to Marxist thought. This fact can be verified in the following lines which, untouched by censorship, evoked social and moral subversion:

Beggar: No need to apologise. I am not a thief, but I could be. It is a right to which I’m entitled. (p.19)

Beggar: In former days, everything belonged to everyone. Nobody owned the soil, and the water did not belong to anyone. Today, each piece of land has an owner and every water source belongs to someone. Who has given it?

Other: I did not.

Beggar: Nobody did. The wise guys, at the beginning of the world, took things and invented the Justice and the Police... (p.20)

Beggar: Yes, I have abandoned society and decided to ask for what belongs to me. To demand is impertinency; to beg is a universally recognised right. It gives pleasure to those to whom you beg, it does not cause envy. Have you noticed that nobody is against beggars? Why? Because a beggar is a man who has given up fighting against the others. (p.23)

Beggar: When they say 'Who gives to the poor, lends to God', they confess that they do not give to the poor but they lend to God... There is no generosity in alms: there is interest. (p.24)

Other: How much does society owe you?

Beggar: As much as it would if there was a "comrade" division". (p.30)

Other: And does it know that you are a beggar?

Beggar: No, it does not. As far as it is concerned, I am a capitalist! And you do not ask a capitalist about their profession! (p.58)

Beggar: Selfishness is the greatest obstacle! It is like a feudal castle in whose chest is kept this abominable word – Property!

Péricles: If I am not mistaken, by the way you speak, you are a communist!

Beggar: Psst! Silence! Communism is a word that, on the way to the dictionary, makes stops at the police station . . . (p.97)

Nancy: And every time that I would have received a little of that money from your hands, I would think that happiness depended on money, but happiness is not about money. It is about love! In love there is a common good, but the world's owners have monopolised and rendered it inaccessible, as the cost of life itself! (p.109)

Beggar: Capitalists did not invent anything. They took advantage of the inventions of others. Worthless people, the ones who make use of everything!

Beggar: Yes, there is. It is enough just to correct these inequalities through a new organisation. (p.122)

Beggar: Look how ridiculous the *petty bourgeois* are. (p.125)

- 37 These phrases would be repudiated by any right-wing dictatorship and, in the case of the Brazilian dictatorship, which waged a communist hunt for over a decade, it constituted an abnormal presence. *Deus Ihe Pague* is an unprecedented event in the history of Brazilian theatre, in the history of censorship and even in the Archive Miroel Silveira's processes. When such an odd occurrence is noted, it is always the connection between Vargas and Procópio that is evoked. However, it is possible to put forward another explanation, since the preserved speeches are very powerful and they do not present any kind of ambiguities in relation to a revolution of manners, social and political.
- 38 As regards another element in this equation, we must remember that the rejection of Marxist discourse was not a privilege of Getúlio Vargas's government or military dictatorship. The Brazilian population strongly opposed communist ideology and, through petitions, was often the protagonist of censorship interventions. So how can it be that these people, the audience, did not see the communist content of the play?

## 4. Diffuse discourses on social justice

- 39 The interpretation of Décio de Almeida Prado, one of the most important theatre critics in Brazilian culture, for this type of behaviour is that, 'in fact, the ABC of Marxism, explained by the Berlitz method of questions and answers, did not frighten anyone, in the first place, because Communism had not been formed as an organised force in Brazil, a process still about to happen'. Furthermore, 'a left-wing text, not linked to the main storyline - the struggle for women - and not

turned into political action, remained at that level of general and uncompromising conversation in which all the ideas are defensible' (Prado 1984: 51).

- 40 Undoubtedly, the plot proved that the reasons pointed out by Prado were pertinent. Nevertheless, even when Communism turned into a significant and feared political association, the play passed through censorship without new cuts.
- 41 Nevertheless, returning to the sentences quoted above, and in order to support Prado's interpretation, we can easily draw parallels between the position of some conservative social institutions and the content that these phrases included. Some lines can be interpreted as ferocious criticisms against property in Marxist terms, but may also refer, for example, to the encyclical of Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* 23. According to this document, 'God intended Earth, with everything that it contains, for the use of all men and peoples, in such a way that created goods should suffice for all, with fairness, under the rules of justice, inseparable from charity. Whatever the form of ownership, adapted to legitimate institutions of the people, according to diverse and changing circumstances, one must always attend to this universal distribution of goods' (Wanderley 2009: 6).
- 42 We may also compare the passages highlighted with the contents presented in some speeches Getúlio Vargas used to address the Nation. In 'The Manifest Discourse to the Nation' (1937), conceived to announce the emergence of the *Estado Novo* (New State) dictatorship, Vargas stated that part of his governments intentions was the improvement of social justice work, to which he was devoted since its advent, namely to put into practice a programme 'disruption-free and capable of attending to the working classes' demands, preferably those that concern basic guarantees of stability and economic security, without which the individual cannot become useful to society and share the benefits of civilisation'.
- 43 These examples seem to clarify how the superficial Marxism of Joracy's play could be confused with other discourses that were circulating in that period – discourses that were articulated, fundamentally, by two social institutions: the Catholic Church and the State – even though they had quite conservative characteristics which did not agree with Marxist postulates. For this reason, we, like Prado, be-

lieve that the clear Marxist and revolutionary content of the play went unnoticed by many viewers as well as by the censor.

- 44 Regarding the Catholic Church, some notions of social justice were embodied in charity and were followed by the exaltation of honoured or sanctified poverty. According to Mollat, projects to eradicate poverty were delineated only after the Renaissance period. During the Middle Ages, poverty was understood to be an inescapable issue, and although people used to constantly repeat the Apostle Paul's words that 'charity never fails', they also heeded the words of Christ, and 'the poor will always be with you'. Although there were ambivalent representations of poverty, there was a strong movement that 'tirelessly impelled by evangelical preaching, and from the thirteenth century on, encouraged also by the Franciscan movement, attempted to reconcile the abjection of actual misery with poverty construed as a virtue' (Mollat 1986: 1).
- 45 The Catholic Church, which had a strong presence in the dissemination of this social imaginary, was not the first to give it a format. We may remember, after all, that the image of the wise and virtuous poor had already been portrayed in texts of classical antiquity. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church, which was committed to strengthening ties with civil society, began to re-articulate its preaching about charity and poverty from the nineteenth-century onward, consequently replacing the notion of alms and the way to deal with the poor. This happened because the Church realised that '... the most serious problem that the Church had to face, and to which it could not remain indifferent, was the poverty of the workers; and this situation could not be resolved through the practice of almsgiving, paternalism or moral exhortation' (Ivern, Bingemer 1994: 26).
- 46 Even though these changes were limited to a 'sense of union' and the closing of the gap between social classes, they did not contest the capitalist system. However, they did involve ideas for measures to be implemented in order to face social injustice, which explains, in a sense, why audiences in 1930 were not shocked by the contents of the play referring to Communism as a response to such injustices.
- 47 The Church has, to this day, pursued this shift of discourse towards a stronger stand on social criticism, aligning itself with human rights and the fight against social inequalities. This framework can explain

why the play made it to 1968 without any interference on the part of the censors, even though the ideological confrontation within Brazil had been greatly enhanced during that period.

48 On the other hand, the State itself, markedly under Vargas's regime, but also explicitly during the military regime installed in 1964, was the protagonist of a series of diffuse discourses on social justice.

49 The notion of social justice in the period of Brazilian history from 1930 to 1954 was summarised by Francisco Weffort, when he affirmed that populist governments such as Vargas's (Brazil) or Perón's (Argentina) shared some contradictory characteristics inasmuch as they were '... strictly, anti-liberal and anti-socialist at the same time. And as if this is not enough, they are able to "usurp" some goals that "normally" could be imputed to liberals as much as to socialists' (Weffort 2003: 95-96).

50 The Brazilian Revolution of 1930, which culminated in the rise of Vargas to power, marked the transition of a government that considered the problem of poverty to be the responsibility of the police, to a government that, in various speeches at least, made it into a transformed it to a priority of State. The incorporation of social justice issues into political discourse took place on a very specific platform of power. That was because the Revolution of 1930 had inaugurated a new phase of Brazilian politics, in which no single group was able to legitimate its power, as did the oligarchies in the previous period.

51 In this sense, Vargas's discourse, which had always incorporated some diffuse elements of social justice, led him to be known as the "father of the poor and mother of the rich". This kind of social justice is evoked in Joracy Camargo's play.

52 This was, however, an extremely conservative position, as the interests of the ruling classes were limited to this framework of commitments. Similarly, the popular expressions would only succeed through this alliance, as the argument that points out the friendship between Vargas and Procópio suggests.

53 Albeit much less pronounced, the fuzzy notion of social justice was also present during the military dictatorship of 1964. A number of programmes for the poor were implemented at that period, such as the Banco Nacional de Habitação (National Housing Bank, known as

BNH) and the expansion of the Social Security System. The idea of a diffuse social justice, therefore, was present in our imagination as much as in Joracy's text. As such, it made it possible for a statement to be read at a conservative level in revolutionary terms.

54 In our explorations into the reasons why *Deus lhe Pague* remained untouched by the censors, Procópio's charisma and popularity would certainly have played a role in blotting out the Marxist content of this play, combined with the broad imaginary instances, namely, charity, poverty and social justice. We may say that the audience did not see it, because Procópio, as an idol, was not associated with left-wing discourse – people refused to imagine their idol was contradicting them.

55 Furthermore, we are led to consider the constituted imaginary role of the figures that make up our cultural heritage since time immemorial. In the present case, we must take into account, beside the idol's presence, the positive and expansive figure of the beggar.

## 5. Beggar as an established figure in social imaginary

56 Regarding this, even Prado admitted that the Beggar's role entirely made up the play's originality, 'that is, a man who, rejected by society, reduced to beggary, has made of it not only a most profitable profession if well-performed, but also an observation post that, by its own marginal status, allows him the exemption and the detachment of the truly wise' (Prado 1984: 54). It is as if he had the ability to look at mankind from a higher standing, allowing him to see its structural weaknesses in a clearer way, as 'a divinity descended from the heaven of pure ideas, where the Intelligence sparkles', as a 'Beggar-Millionaire-Philosopher'.

57 This figure, developed in Joracy's play and explored by him in other works, embodies, in the popular imaginary, an incognito figure disguised as a beggar who, when revealed, turns out to be either wise or someone of great importance – an 'Other' who can unleash magic.

58 It is specifically from these profiles, related to the common places that hold a society together and cement their universal meaning, de-



picted in the expression 'social imaginary', that we can position the figure of the beggar in artistic productions. It is precisely as a beggar that Odysseus is dressed when he returns to Ithaca and, as Ricoeur puts it, from the mixture of recognition and revenge that this story holds, 'a spouse will be recognised, but, in this impulse, a master will be reinstated in the fullness of his domain' (Ricoeur 2006: 90).

- 59 In Arabic tales, the trickster who, among other disguises, dressed himself as a beggar, also has a lot of relevance - as in the work *The Maqâmât*, from Al-Hamadhâni, where slithery and bohemian characters, despite their many guises, 'had, however, literary culture and knew the art of improvisation in verse or rhymed prose' (Hanania 2004: 28).
- 60 The beggar is a traditional figure in theatre. In Greek comedy, for example, the term *parasito* refers to the 'funny, nice and gluttonous' beggar 'who entered in a seducing manner into wealthy homes through menial services', or who flattered others in exchange for food (Gonçalves et al. 2007: 156).
- 61 In Europe, since the Middle Ages, there has been an entire literary tradition around this theme and, as pointed out by Paola Pugliatti, 'the European literary production on vagabonds, rogues and false beggars constitutes a comparatively homogeneous corpus of texts' (Pugliatti 2003: 131), that have directly influenced theatrical narratives. On the other hand, 'the character of the blind beggar, miserable and pathetic, appears in one of the first examples of profane theatre in French, a short comic play in two parts: *The Boy and the Blind Man*' (Weygand, Cohen 2009: 14). This farce from the thirteenth century tells the story of a naive blind man who was exploited by a boy who used his illness to get alms. Here, the theme of pseudo-poverty was present in that the two characters made a fortune out of charity.
- 62 This was, indeed, commonplace in many folk tales and Roger Chartier tells us that, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a successful body of texts was responsible for the definitive emergence of the subject of the false beggar in popular culture and imaginary. Precarious social conditions and the increase of the poor population in that period contributed to the growth of this type in literature. Although they were perceived as threats to social order, they were also

seen as a reserve of picturesque figures 'whose condemned immorality attracted and whose artifices captivated' (Chartier 2004: 37).

- 63 They were described, frequently, as smart persons whose craftiness could easily deceive the gullible. The inexhaustible invention of fraud and mischief gave these characters an inherent cleverness. If, in the past, the incentives to charity transformed the poor into the image of Christ, with the adoption of new social assistance practices, this relationship was modified and the beggar began to be portrayed as a dangerous being, and typified in certain legal categories.
- 64 In Shakespeare's plays, there is a whole gallery of marginal characters who were inspired by this kind of popular literature, especially in the so-called rogue pamphlets, such as: 'Edgar in *King Lear* who feigns to be a lunatic beggar ...; Autolycus, in *The Winter's Tale*, a pedlar who performs various disguises and describes himself as a tinker and hooker (hookers were those beggars who stole linen by using a hook); Prince Hal's companions in *Henry IV* parts 1 & 2, who are highwaymen; and Pistol in *Henry V* who declares in a monologue that to make a living when he comes back from the war, he will impersonate ... a vagrant' (Pugliatti 2003: 149).
- 65 It is remarkable that in many of these plays the beggar was connected to some kind of social criticism associated with his own image (as in *The Boy and the Blind Man*), or through his position as a third party in the game of social relations.
- 66 This second type is very well depicted, for example, in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), where the social vices and corruption of the time were exposed by a narrator embodied in the figure of a beggar. His final sentence - the most important in the play - confirmed such a disposition, declaring that '... it is difficult to determine whether (in the fashionable Vices) the fine Gentlemen imitate the Gentlemen of the Road, or the Gentlemen of the Road the fine Gentlemen. ... It would have shown that the lower sort of People have their Vices in a degree as well as the Rich: and that they are punished for them' (Gay 1995). Although Gay's play is more famous, this specific treatment around the figure of the beggar can be seen to have historical antecedents in plays such as *The Jovial Crew* or *The Merry Beggars*' (1641), written by Richard Brome.

- 67 During the twentieth century, it was a resource exploited in different ways, in plays written by authors as diverse as Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett. Brecht makes use of it in his didactic phase play *The Beggar or The Dead Dog* (1919). A blind beggar entertains a dialogue with an emperor, just before the party that will mark his victory in foreign lands, and sustains an exercise in the deconstruction of all that is considered righteous.

## 6. Final Conclusions: the figure of the beggar as a nexus of discourses

- 68 From the point of view of socio-discursive imaginaries, the figure of the beggar in *Deus l'he Pague* functions as a nexus for the various discourses that intersect in this play, articulating a series of preconceived ideas and meanings around the narrative, giving a precise profile to the discourses of social justice.
- 69 The long tradition of the representation of the beggar in works of art, and, especially in the theatre, was often linked to social protests embodied by the third person that this figure usually represented in stage plays. This is what we have attempted to demonstrate in this brief historical sketch, but its criticism is not identified, in any way, with the left-wing ideology itself.
- 70 As a character already established in the social imaginary, the beggar exposes, in effect, the ills and problems of a society, but he expresses his criticism as a participatory witness (who often sees society from a wiser point of view precisely because of his position as an outsider), and does not offer a radical re-articulation of social production related to various left-wing ideologies. The beggar's pronouncements, therefore, are already circumscribed within this universe that is predetermined by the long representative tradition of the beggar in works of art. In addition, within that sphere, their speech can easily be identified with various diffuse discourses of social justice that come from conservative institutions of society, such as the State and the Catholic Church.

- 71 Generally speaking, the figure of the beggar, consolidated in our imagination as withholder of knowledge about the world, is also creditor of a tradition that validates three circulating discourses in our culture: religion, state and literature or theatre. *Deus lhe Pague* benefits from the positivity of this imaginary that, in another context, covers the traces of what public opinion does not see and of what the institution of censorship, hence, does not need to delete.

---

## Works cited

- Bezerra, Emanuela Antunes, et al. (2008). 'Do Humanismo Cristão à práxis política de oposição a ditadura: memórias de uma experiência dominicana', in *Anais do VII Encontro de História Oral*. São Paulo: ANPUH, 1-18.
- Camargo, Joracy (1945). *Deus lhe pague*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Zelio Valverde.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius (1987). *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. New York: Polity Press.
- Charaudeau, Patrick (1997). *Le discours d'information médiatique. La construction du miroir social*. Paris: Nathan.
- Chartier, Roger (2004). 'A construção estética da realidade: vagabundos e pícaros na Idade Moderna', in *Tempo*, 17/1, 33-51.
- Foucault, Michel (1995). *A Arqueologia do Saber*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária.
- Gay, John (1995). *The Beggar's Opera*. Virginia: University of Virginia Library.
- Gomes, Mayra et al (2008) Eds. *Forbidden Words, presuppositions and implications in theatre censorship*. São José dos Campos. BlueCom.
- Gonçalves, Rodrigo Gurgel (2007). 'O que é um parasito? Uma análise etimológica e semântica do termo parasito em diferentes idiomas', in: *Acta Scientiarum Human and Social Sciences*, 29/2, 151-161.
- Hanania, Aina Rameza (2004). 'Leitura e Educação: as Maqâmât de Al-Hamadhâni', in: *Videtur Letras*, 1/1, 2004, 27-30.
- Ivern, Francisco / Bingemer, Maria Clara Lucchetti (1994). *Doutrina Social da Igreja e Teologia da Libertação*. São Paulo: Loyola.
- Lehfeld, Neide Aparecida de Souza / Verona, Kate Fernanda (2003). 'O Estado e As Políticas Sociais Brasileiras', in: *Anais do VII Congresso Internacional del CLAD sobre la Reforma del Estado y de la Administración Pública*. Panamá: CLAD, 1-12.
- Mollat, Michel (1986). *The Poor in the Middle Ages*. New Haven: Yale.
- Oscar, Henrique (1985). *O teatro e a semana de arte moderna de São Paulo*. Rio de Janeiro: Cia Brasileira de Artes Gráficas.

Prado, Décio de Almeida (1984). *Procópio Ferreira*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

Pugliatti, Paola (2003). *Beggary and Theatre in Early Modern England*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company.

Ricœur, Paul (2006). *Percurso do Reconhecimento*. São Paulo: Loyola.

Wanderley, Luiz Eduardo W (2006). 'Notas sobre a doutrina social da Igreja', in: *Revista Nures*, 1/3, 1-10.

Weffort, Francisco (2003). *O Populismo na política brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

*O discurso-manifesto de Getulio Vargas à Nação* (Vargas's Manifest Discourse to the Nation). Document électronique consultable à [http://www.franklinmartins.com.br/estacao\\_historia\\_artigo.php?titulo=o-estado-novo-discurso-manifesto-de-getulio-vargas-a-nacao-rio-1937#](http://www.franklinmartins.com.br/estacao_historia_artigo.php?titulo=o-estado-novo-discurso-manifesto-de-getulio-vargas-a-nacao-rio-1937#). Page consultée le 15 avril 2010.

---

1 This research is related to a Thematic Project, co-ordinated by Dr Maria Cristina Castilho Costa, which comprises many other investigative perspectives.

---

## English

This paper is related to research about censorship in Brazilian stage plays. The plays studied belong to the 'Archive Miroel Silveira', a collection of theatre censorship processes, conducted in the State of São Paulo, Brazil, from 1925 to 1970. The research results provided a quantitative overview in relation to each form of censorship that allowed us to draw conclusions about the characteristics and applications of this censorship, according to the social or political context. However, in this study, other dimensions of censorship were uncovered, giving us an insight into the tactical use of popular beliefs. The unique history of one play, written by Joracy Camargo, caught our attention because, having been staged for over forty years, and although at times subjected to cuts, it was periodically performed in its uncensored form. Furthermore, its plot revolved around idealised figures in Brazilian culture, defying censorship intervention. Consequently, it became the focus of our research, and the observations of its circumstances enlightened us about censorship strategies in dealing with the established culture and its imaginary figures. This article intends to share our findings about censorship activities in which figures of the 'social imaginary' or the social context in general, have a central role in stage plays.

## Français

Cet article est lié à une recherche sur les mots censurés dans le théâtre brésilien. Les pièces théâtrales étudiées appartiennent à l'Archive Miroel Silveira, un ensemble de processus de censure théâtrale, conduit dans l'État de São Paulo, au Brésil, de 1925 à 1970. Ces études ont réussi à dessiner un panorama quantitatif, par rapport à chaque type de censure, qui nous a permis de tirer des conclusions sur les particularités de la censure et ses mobilisations, en fonction du contexte social ou politique. Néanmoins, avec ces études, d'autres dimensions de la censure ont été perçues, nous informant sur son utilisation tactique de croyances populaires. La trajectoire particulière d'une pièce écrite par Joracy Camargo a attiré notre attention, car elle a été représentée pendant plus de quarante ans, et elle a été, parfois, entièrement autorisée, et, d'autres fois, soumise à des coupures. En outre, l'intrigue est construite autour de figures idéalisées dans la culture brésilienne, défiant l'intervention des censeurs. Par conséquent, elle est devenue un centre d'exploration, et les observations de ses circonstances nous ont éclairées sur les stratégies de la censure dans le traitement de la culture établie et de ses figures imaginaires. Cet article se propose de partager nos découvertes sur les activités de la censure lorsque les figures de l'imaginaire social, ou le contexte culturel général, ont un rôle central dans des pièces de théâtre.

---

**Mayra Rodrigues Gomes**

Tenured Professor at the Department of Journalism and Publishing, School of Communications and Arts, University of São Paulo. 443, Prof. Lúcio Martins Rodrigues Avenue, Butantã, São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 05508-020

**Eliza Bachega Casadei**

PhD Student, at the Department of Journalism and Publishing, School of Communications and Arts, University of São Paulo under the supervision of Professor Mayra R. Gomes. 443, Prof. Lúcio Martins Rodrigues Avenue, Butantã, São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 05508-020